SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 442. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 19TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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No. 442.] For the Week ending June 18th, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

SILENCE ✲ IS ✲ GOLDEN.

A STORY OF THE MONMOUTH REBELLION.

MANY people have wondered why I set such store by this old coin. This old guinea of the time of Charles II. with the words "Silence is golden" so deeply graven on the reverse side, has aroused great curiosity and many are the questions that have been put to me concerning it. I have always considered it wise to decline answering those inquiries; but it now seems to me that I ought not to permit the story to die with me. I feel that an incident so intimately connected with the history of the country, an incident which might have altered the Succession itself, should be recorded. It was only known to four of us, and the other three have been dead these many years. So I will write it down and place the manuscript among my books and relics, where it will be discovered some day when I am gone.

I was a boy of six at the time, but the events which I am about to chronicle made an ineffaceable impression upon me. That which I did not then understand has become plain to me since, so that I am able to set down the story as a coherent whole.

It was in the year 1685; Monmouth had landed at Lyme Regis, raised his standard, and proclaimed himself king. My father, who lived near Sedgemoor, secretly favoured the Duke's cause, but he was quite against the Rebellion, which he considered ill-advised, and had declined to take part in it. I well remember the march of the rebels into Bridgewater, my father having taken me there; and I can even now see my father shaking his head, and I wondered why he did so—for to me it was a grand sight. Events proved that he had reason for sadness; and I, as I recall the scene, can well understand that dubious movement and grieved expression.

One evening—it was the evening of the day on which the fatal battle of Sedgemoor had been fought, as I afterwards learnt—my father and I were seated in the best room of our little house. It was dark and I should have been in bed, but all our men-servants and labourers had left us to join the Duke or to run away, and our one woman-servant had also fled, so my father had allowed me to sit up and keep him company for a while. Occasionally we heard the sounds of hurrying fugitives who had crept out of their hiding places and were trying to escape in the darkness. My father was sitting in an old chair and I had just left my own seat to climb on his knees. Scarcely had I nestled my curly head on my father's breast, than there came a knock at the outer door that startled us. It was a peculiar knock; as though someone were in a hurry and very anxious to gain admittance, yet half afraid to make a noise.

"Some poor fool wants to find a place of refuge," muttered my father sadly. "Well, I must help them."

"Perhaps it is Mary come back again," I suggested. I was just a little frightened at the unexpected visit.

"Perhaps it is!" exclaimed my father brightly. But boy as I was, I could see that he did not think so, but was pretending because I was afraid.

We went to the door, for I grasped his hand tightly.

"Who's there?" asked my father.

"Open quickly!" replied the stranger. "Open, if you are still a friend of the cause!"

I felt my father's hand tremble. He gently released himself from my grasp, and, drawing back the bolts, threw open the door.

"Enter, my lord! You are welcome!"

We could see two figures in the doorway. There was a whispered conversation between them which finished by one pushing the other forward.

"No! You go alone," said the one. "If they catch me, what does it matter? *You* will be more likely to escape in that case, as they will think that you are near at hand and not seek you so close to this accursed place. Waltham," he added in a higher tone, "you were right after all. Yet I beseech you to help his Majesty in his hour of need." And he was gone.

The new-comer hesitated a moment, but my father firmly and politely pulled him inside and shut the door.

"Come this way, sire," he said, "you may rely upon all the help I can give you."

"Call me 'James' or what you please, but not *that!*" replied Monmouth, for I knew afterwards that it was he. "Those who promised their help failed to keep their word. My cause is lost, and I am a fugitive on whose

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head a price will soon be set. Grey tells me that you are a friend and that you will hide me for a few days, and help me to escape. I can offer you no reward save the thanks of an unsuccessful man—a rebel!" The last words were spoken so bitterly—so bitterly!

My father made no reply, but hurried him into the room we had just quitted and very soon placed some food before the Duke, whom I had an opportunity of observing closely. I remember that I felt great pity for the dejected-looking man, whose general appearance took my boyish fancy. I did not understand what it was all about, why he should come to us; that he was hiding from somebody was plain, but I was too young and too tired to grasp the meaning of what was taking place.

Our guest ate hungrily and had soon finished the meal. My father and he then spoke together for several minutes, and at the end of the conversation he led Monmouth out of the room, I following them. We went through the passages towards the back of the house, where there was a large disused apartment—a place like a barn, in which, in fact, stores had been kept in past times. It had been shut up for years, ever since my father's mother had met with a fatal accident while mounting a ladder to reach the high ledge.

"The place is dusty," said my father, "but it is the safest part of the house. We can soon spoil the chance of tracing the footsteps by running a broom over the floor."

Attracted by a curiously-shaped piece of wood which I saw near the doorway, I stopped to examine it and so lost the rest of the conversation; when I looked up again with a yawn my father was shutting a door in the wall at the further end. It was a panel door, and when shut it could not be distinguished from the other panels.

Just at that moment, a faint noise—a succession of thuds, it seemed—struck upon our ears. My father ran swiftly on tip-toe along the passage, returning the next instant.

"They are here!" he exclaimed. "Quick! There is no time to lose!" He seized the Duke by the shoulder and hurried him back to the panel. In an instant it was opened and Monmouth had sprung from the ground into the hiding place, which was about four feet from the level.

My father took up a long strip of wood that was lying on the floor and raked the dust in all directions. Louder and louder became the knocking. My father extinguished the light, half dragged me out of the room and locked the door, taking the key with him.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Open in the King's name!" I heard a voice shout.

Hastily brushing the dust from his clothes with his hand, my father went to the door, grumbling very loudly as he shot back the bolt.

"What is the meaning of this?" he growled. I was surprised; I had never heard him speak in such a surly manner. "Isn't it enough to be——"

"Keep that surly tongue of yours quiet!" said one who was in front.

They pushed their way inside, about a dozen of them. Two of them held torches, which lighted up the passage in weird fashion. Two of the men were better dressed than the others and were evidently in command.

"Where are they?" asked one of these two. Then, as my father did not reply, he continued: "You have two rebels in hiding here, I say! Where are they?"

"There are not two rebels here," answered my fathe quietly.

"You shall suffer for this!" exclaimed the other furiously. But the first interrupted him.

"You can't make a horse drink if he is unwilling to do so; you know the proverb, and enough about human nature to understand that it is useless to waste time in talking to this man if he refuses to open his mouth. All this time the rascals are getting away from us, most probably. Let us search the place!"

The other bowed, gave orders to his men, and they marched along the passage, taking my father with them. I remained near the door, bewildered.

After standing there for two or three minutes, I began to grope my way in the dark towards the staircase with the intention of following them. I stepped upon something hard, close to the wall, and picked it up. It was a large key. I was fingering it, wonderingly, when the man who had seemed to be the chief of the little band came towards me with a light.

"Well, my little man," he said in rather a pleasant tone, "what have you got there? Oh, a key. It appears to be the one I am wanting. Your father opened that place at the back with a key like this when he went in there a little while ago, eh?"

"Yes, sir," I replied unsuspectingly.

"Ah! I thought so! Now you come along with me and show me all about the place, like a good boy!"

Completely won over by his pleasant manner and glad to be of use to such a gentleman, I went with him.

The key fitted the lock and we were soon in the place which my father and I had entered with the fugitive Duke only a few minutes previously.

"H'm! I think I am on the right track!" he muttered, half audibly, as he looked on the floor. "So he is hidden here, eh?" he inquired, turning to me. "Ha, ha! Your father *is* a clever man! I'm sure nobody would have guessed that a man was hiding in this big room. Now I wonder if I could find where he is hiding, eh? *You* know, don't you? Silly man to hide away when I want to give him something! Where is he?"

Don't blame me. I was only a child. I did not understand what it all meant; I was tired, excited, charmed by the man's pleasant way of talking, and proud that I knew something that he did not.

"I'll show you!" I exclaimed. And without waiting for him, I ran across the dusty floor and pulled at the lower end of the panel.

"So he is in *there!*"

Struck by the change in the tone of voice, I looked up at him in surprise. He paid no further heed to me, but drew his sword and tried to force open the panel. It opened suddenly and the Duke jumped down in front of his pursuer.

"I should not like to see you break that sword, my dear uncle," he said with a touch of irony, "so I spare you any further trouble. Had I known that *you* were so near, I would have awaited your arrival."

The man called "uncle" stepped backwards in the direction of the door and began to cry out for the others, but Monmouth shot quickly past him and flung the door to.

"No, no!" exclaimed the Duke. "We have a little account to settle quite privately. It seems to me that you have gone a trifle too far in your desire to catch me. Fancy His Majesty the King of England turning rebel-catcher! Now listen! Two years ago, there was a plot against my father and your brother—the Rye House Plot, it was styled—in which you were kind enough to say I took a leading part. On that occasion also you put yourself to some trouble to seek for me. You were

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always against me! We met in the open and we fought a duel, or, I ought to say, *half* a duel. I am recalling the circumstance, lest you have forgotten it. It was agreed that we should fight with pistols; that we should toss for the first shot and that if the other were able to fire, he should have *his* turn. You were fortunate; you fired first—and missed! Before I could raise my pistol, some of the Royal troops appeared—it may be that they should have arrived sooner!—and I thought it prudent to take my departure without delay. I have had to wait for my turn, but it has come now and I mean to avail myself of the opportunity!"

By the feeble light of the lantern, which he still held, I could see that the King's face had grown pale.

"Hand the light to the boy," continued the Duke. "Ah, would you!" he exclaimed as the King made another attempt to get to the door. He snatched the lantern from him and pointed the pistol at his head. The King shrank back and Monmouth bade me hold the light.

"Take your stand against the wall or I will shoot you where you are! That's right! Twenty paces was it not? Well, I will give you the full distance! Now, boy, stand on that piece of wood and hold the lantern above your head. So! That will do."

He raised his arm and pointed the pistol at the King. I looked first at one then at the other of the actors in this strange scene. I saw that Monmouth's hand trembled.

Bang!

I uttered a cry of terror and dropped the lantern. I heard an oath, followed by a rush of footsteps, a scuffle and the clash of swords. I fled into a corner and hid my face; but something impelled me to look round at the two foes. By the light of the moon which gleamed through the only window in the place, I could see them engaged in a desperate fight; oaths mingled with the ring of the blades, and even to me it was evident that they were in deadly earnest. But they were destined not to finish the struggle.

The door was thrown open and my father rushed in, holding a torch. He seemed to grasp the situation immediately. Stooping down, he placed the flaming torch against the woodwork. He clutched me by the collar and pushed me through an opening into a place which I know now was our garden. I saw him run back, upset the King, and drag Monmouth out. The next thing I remembered was that my father had me in his arms and was running hard, he and his companion panting for breath. In the distance I could see the flames leaping up into the sky.

"We have a good start," my father jerked out. "That old house will burn like tinder; and as they do not know their way about it, they will have enough to do in looking after themselves for a minute or two. That is our chance."

"May the King be burnt!" exclaimed the Duke savagely.

"The King!" said my father in surprise.

In a few words, Monmouth explained. My father made no reply.

On they went; not keeping to the road, but forcing their way through holes in the hedges, running in all directions, until thoroughly exhausted. Then they sat down in a dry ditch and rested.

The Duke and my father began to talk earnestly and in whispers as soon as they had regained breath sufficiently. Worn out with fatigue, I fell asleep.

I was awakened by something touching my forehead; it was my father kissing me. I was lying on a bed, where they had placed me just as I was, for fear of disturbing me by taking off my clothes. My father and the Duke, dressed as peasants, were about to leave the room.

"You will stay here with good Master Methold, Edward," said my father, seeing that I had woke up. "He will take care of you. I must go away for a while. God bless you, my boy!" Tears stood in his eyes, and I heard him say in a low voice: "*He* alone knows whether I shall ever see the boy again!"

I clung to him, crying bitterly. He kissed me again and again, and then led me to Master Methold. Monmouth drew from his pocket a guinea—*this* guinea—and placed it in my hand.

"Take this, my child," he said sorrowfully. "It is all I have to give you to compensate you for the loss of a father's love and care. I do not blame you; but when you grow up, remember that 'Silence is golden.'"

For more than three years I remained with Master Methold, who treated me with great kindness. I heard that the Duke had been caught and executed, but I had no tidings of my father for two years, when Master Methold told me that he was living somewhere across the sea, and would be able to fetch me one day. It was more than a year after that ere I again saw my dear father. He was much altered and greatly affected by the meeting. He had prospered abroad; and now that the King was dead, and the Monmouth Rebellion nearly forgotten, he considered that he would be safe in England if he lived in another part of the country under an assumed name.

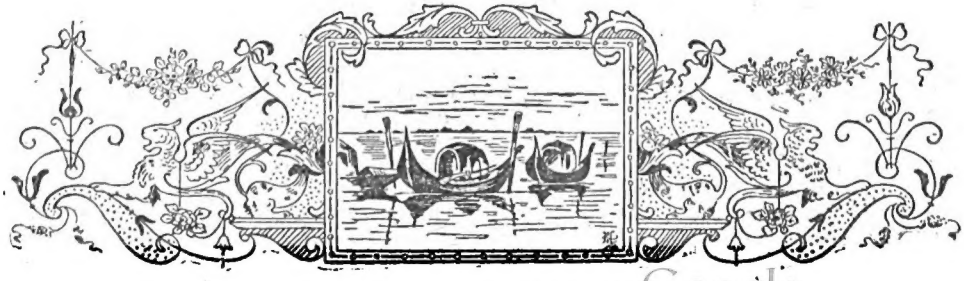
* * * * *

I, James Harlow, grandson of the writer of the foregoing, found the manuscript covered with dust among some old books. I have transcribed it.

My grandfather directed that an old guinea which he possessed should be buried with him. Not until this manuscript was found did anyone understand the reason of this strange request.

My grandfather was always a very quiet man.

GEO. DAY.



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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

"HE is perhaps the only example which history affords of one man having governed the most opposite events and proved sufficient for the most various destinies."

No man's character was ever so completely and so tersely summed up as the great Oliver's is here in these few words of a critic belonging to another race and nation, and, as regards his varied destinies, it may be added that no man ever was raised up and set to work by the Controller of human destinies as opportunely as he was.

History shows no parallel to it, not even in the oft-quoted story of Cincinnatus, and certainly in all the long array of our rulers there is none other whose story is so crammed with wonders or who crowded so many notable and pregnant acts into the busy days of a few years as this gentleman-farmer of Huntingdonshire, who at forty-three left his farming and vestry-meetings and the like and girded on his sword to go and fight the good fight of freedom, and who at fifty-two laid it aside to prove himself as good a statesman and ruler as he had been soldier and general.

His claim to a foremost place among the Makers of Britain is a twofold one, for he was a restorer, a re-invigorator, as it were, of this realm, as well as a very considerable widener of it. When the futile and inglorious reign of "the most learned fool in Christendom" came to an end, all the brilliant promise of the Elizabethan age had been woefully obscured, and the glories of the great Queen and her pirates looked like those of a summer sun setting behind a bank of fog.

In the words of Macaulay: "On the day of the accession of James I. England descended from the ranks which she had hitherto held and began to be regarded as a power hardly of the second order. . . . He began his administration by putting an end to the war which had raged many years between England and Spain, and from that time he shunned hostilities with a caution which was proof against the insults of his neighbours and the clamour of his subjects."

How different this from the gallant days of Gloriana and her knights! And yet this poor crowned and sceptred ninny aspired to be a despot even as his son after him did. It is true that these realms were beginning to need a despot and that badly, but not such a one as could ever have been born of that hopeless House of Stuart. A despot who is a strong man may be good or evil as he uses his opportunities and his powers, but the whole stage of history has not yet held a despot who was also a weak man who did not prove himself at once a curse to his country and the world.

The story of the feeble violence and silly cunning with which Charles the First sought to enforce that ridiculous theory of his about the Divine Right of Kings has been too often and too variously told for us to need to trouble with it here. There *is* a Divine Right of Kings, as the great Oliver was very soon to show with most unmistakable and most unanswerable logic, but the kind of king who really has divine rights, does not usually have them because he is the son of his father, and especially of such a father as James the First of England and Sixth of Scotland.

Our present concern is with the fact that this Empire of ours, in a most critical state of its process of making which came very near to one of unmaking, was saved and transformed from weakness to strength by the substitution of the real despotism of the Lord Protector from the sham of histrionic despotism of Charles the First.

The fact was that the body-corporate of this infant empire was assailed by the worst of all national disorders, internal disintegration. England, the very heart and centre of it, was about to be rent in twain by the frenzied and pitiless talons of civil war, and that is a war in which the right side—which of course is always the best side—must not only win, but utterly crush and pulverise the other unless wreck and chaos irretrievable are to follow.

This was the central idea that the Great Oliver grasped just as Edward of the Longlegs had grasped his brilliantly premature idea of the United Kingdom. He was the last of that series of iron-handed men that had begun with William the Norman. The watchword of his whole public life was "healing and settling." The wounds of his country had to be healed and its disorders settled, no matter by what means, but it had to be done, and in this deep-rooted conviction we see at a glance his kinship with the other Empire-makers who had gone before him.

Of his early life there is little to be said, though it is noteworthy that he was once fined £10 for neglecting a summons to appear at the King's coronation and receive the honour of knighthood. He little thought then that he would one day find it his duty to refuse the crown and sceptre of England.

Everyone who has read even the school books knows that when the war actually began all the apparent advantages were on the side of the Royalists. Though the first battles afforded the extraordinary spectacle of mere conflicts of amateur soldiers, few of whom had ever seen a real fight before, the Cavaliers, trained to horsemanship and the use of arms, and versed in all manly sports, made far finer fighting material than the raw levies of the Parliament. Had this difference continued victory must have remained, as it began, with the Royalists, with results to the nation that could hardly

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have failed to be of the very worst sort. This is what Cromwell himself says on this all-important subject:

"At my first going out into this engagement I saw our men were beaten at every hand. Your troops, said I, are most of them old, decayed serving-men, and tapsters and such kind of fellows, and, said I, their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons and persons of quality. Do you think that the spirits of such base, mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them? You must get men of spirit and, take it not ill what I say—I know you will not—of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or else you will be beaten still."

These wise words, which, by the way, were said to no less a man than John Hampton himself, form a key to all the battles of the Civil War. No sooner did Oliver come on to the field as a plain captain of yeomanry horse than his keen, if untaught, eye instantly recognised the one great virtue and strength of the Royalist party. They had an Idea, a devotion, a principle for the sake of which they were ready to sell their lands, melt their plate, beggar their families, and lose their own lives, and men so equipped could only be successfully met and withstood by men who, as he himself put it in that quaintly eloquent phraseology of his, "made some conscience of what they did," and thereupon he set himself to find such men and make soldiers of them.

How well he succeeded the following extract from a contemporary news-letter written some ten months after the outbreak of war will sufficiently tell:

"As for Colonel Cromwell"—promotion, it will be seen, was somewhat rapid in those stormy days—"he hath two thousand brave men, well disciplined. No man swears but he pays his twelve pence. If he be drunk he is set in the stocks, or worse. If one calls the other Roundhead he is cashiered; insomuch that the countries where they come leap for joy of them and come in and join with them. How happy it were if all the forces were thus disciplined!"

On the field of Marston Moor, Prince Rupert nicknamed Cromwell "Old Ironsides," and from that day to this the most invincible troops that ever marched to battle have been named after him. Years afterwards, when his work and theirs was done, their leader was able to say of them: "From that day forward they were never beaten and wherever they were engaged against the enemy they beat continually."

This is literally true. Whether in skirmish or battle, at home or abroad, whether pitted against the disorderly chivalry of the Loyalists or the rigid discipline of the finest Continental troops; whether storming a breach or bearing the brunt of a half-lost battle, these psalm-singing, hard-hitting Crusaders of the new Church Militant not only were never beaten, but never once failed to hurl the enemy back in confusion and disaster.

In them, in short, that stubborn English valour which has since pushed its way all over the world was first *disciplined*. They formed the first model ever seen of an English regiment, a combination of many units of strength and valour moving and fighting as one, and the fact that "Old Ironsides" was the first man thus to add discipline to valour is in itself no small portion of his title to fame as an Empire-maker.

The first occasion on which these Ironsides made their mark in battle is one of even greater importance than the battle itself, for it marks the entrance on to the stage of history of the first regularly disciplined English regiment, the parent of those who, on a thousand fields since then, have proved themselves worthy of their grim but splendid ancestors. It was the first time, too, that they had a chance to try conclusions with Rupert and his Cavaliers, hitherto unconquered and irresistible.

It was July 2nd, 1644, on a dull and storm-threatening afternoon, that Cavalier and Roundhead first met in a really serious fashion. Compared with what was now to be done Edgehill and all that had come after it had been trifles, for so far the conflicts had been those of amateurs at the art of war, each engaged, as it were, in licking the other into shape, and the conclusion that they now had to try was which of them had got into the best shape. There were about four-and-twenty thousand each of them as they stood through the anxious hours of that summer afternoon on either side of a ditch running across Marston Moor, each watching for a chance to attack, but feeling, no doubt, that the doings of the next few hours would decide an issue which needed a certain amount of thinking over.

The two armies were drawn up upon what is now the regulation pattern, right and left wings and centre. Cromwell with his Ironsides on the left of the Parliamentary army faced Rupert on the right of the Royalists, and he was supported by the infantry of what was then known as the Eastern Association. The King's centre was held by Newcastle, and against it was the Parliamentary centre reinforced by nine thousand Scots Infantry. The Royal left wing was composed of Goring's cavalry regiments and was faced by the Parliamentary right wing under the two Fairfaxes.

During the afternoon there was an exchange of cannon shots which doesn't seem to have done very much harm on either side. Prince Rupert, with his usual impetuosity, had been for some hours wanting to get over the ditch and try conclusions with the Ironsides, who were posted on a little eminence amidst standing corn, and who had wiled away the anxious hours of waiting with mutual exhortations and psalm singing, not a little to the amusement of Rupert and his gallant scapegraces, who were yet to learn that these close-cropped, grim-visaged Puritans could ride and fight a great deal better than they could sing.

The King's older generals, no doubt contemplating Continental etiquette, had decided that it was too late to fight that evening and had withdrawn to their quarters Cromwell, laughing at etiquette as he did at everything else that was not of practical utility, saw his chance, jumped the ditch and went hot-footed and hot-handed into Rupert's ranks. A bullet scored his neck, and hearing someone cry out that he was wounded he shouted: "All's well. A miss is as good as a mile," and charged on. Whether or not he was the first to use this now favourite expression I am not able to say, but at least it was characteristic.

The charge was met in a fashion worthy of Rupert and the gallant gentlemen who followed him, and we learn that after the first onset the Ironsides reeled back, but it was only for a moment. Some Scots cavalry came up behind them, they surged forward again, discipline and valour did their work, and a few minutes afterwards Prince Rupert and his merry men had met more than their match, and, ere long, to use his own words, Colonel Cromwell "had scattered them before him like a little dust." The remnants of them were chased and cut down with ruthless severity, which was then part of the Puritan character, almost to the gates of York, eight miles away.

But Cromwell, profiting by the mistakes which Rupert himself had made in his headlong charges, kept his men

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well in hand, and when once the Royalist right wing was broken, led his men round to see how the battle had gone on the Parliamentary right and centre.

If he had not done so Marston Moor might have replaced Charles Stuart on the throne of England. Goring had broken up Fairfax's cavalry as completely as Oliver had broken up Rupert's. He had flung them back upon their infantry supports, breaking these in turn, after which he flung himself with the seemingly triumphant Royalists of the centre on the Scots Infantry, taking them in flank and almost routing them, too. Only three regiments of them out of nine held their ground, the rest had broken and fled, and the Earl of Leven, their leader, was already making the best of his way towards Leeds.

The battle at this moment presented one of the strangest spectacles in the history of warfare. On the one side Prince Rupert with his broken brigades was flying towards the North, on the other Leven and Manchester and Fairfax, believing the day hopelessly lost, were making equal haste towards the South. Such was the juncture at which the Man of Destiny arrived. He was in command of the only really disciplined force on the field.

Mr. Frederick Harrison, in his excellent monograph on Cromwell, thus graphically describes what happened: "In an hour the genius of Cromwell had changed disaster into victory. Launching the Scotch troopers of his own wing against Newcastle's Whitecoats, and the infantry of the Eastern Association to succour the remnants of the Scots in the centre, he swooped with the bulk of his own cavalry round the rear of the King's army, and fell upon Goring's victorious troopers on the opposite side of the field. Taking them in the rear, all disordered as they were in the chase and the plunder, he utterly crushed and dispersed them. Having thus with his own squadron annihilated the cavalry of the enemy's both wings, he closed round upon the Royalist centre, and there the Whitecoats and the remnants of the King's Infantry were cut to pieces almost to a man."

Such was Marston Moor, and how completely it was the work of the one man of destiny may be seen in the fact that, complete and crushing as the victory was, its advantages were almost entirely negatived by the incapacity and imbecility of the Parliamentary leaders in the West and South. Everyone of any consequence wanted to be supreme leader; no one had either definite plans or the capacity to carry them through; and when at last there was a prospect of bringing matters to an issue on the field of Newberry, the Royalist forces, though half-beaten, were allowed to get away with all their guns, stores and ammunition in spite of the fact that Manchester was in command of a very superior force.

This was as good as a defeat for the forces of the Parliament, for it was the cause of dividing their councils. Manchester and those who sided with him had apparently begun to fear the terrible earnestness of the Captain of the Ironsides, and were for making peace with the King and patching matters up somehow. But Cromwell, with deeper insight, saw that the quarrel had now gone too far and that it could not stop till one side or the other had had a thorough and decisive beating, and that side he was fully determined should be the King's.

The dispute ended in the fall of Manchester and the triumph of Cromwell. Then came the re-organisation of the Parliamentary forces under what was at this time the New Model, and this New Model, be it noted, was the first standing army of professional soldiers that the United Kingdom had ever seen. Its nominal Commander-in Chief was Sir Thomas Fairfax, but its master spirit and guiding genius was Oliver Cromwell.

But meanwhile the tide of Royalism had been on the rise again, sweeping up from the West and South. The armies faced each other on the borders of Leicestershire, but Cromwell was not there. Fairfax, no doubt knowing his own weakness, entreated that he might come and command the horse. He came, and then, as Clarendon pathetically remarks, "the evil genius of the Kingdom in a moment shifted the whole scene," and it is related that when, after rumours had been for some days flying through both armies as to his arrival, "Old Ironsides" at last came upon the field of action, all the cavalry of the Parliament raised a great shout of joy.

The battle that he came to fight was Naseby, and, saving for the superior discipline displayed on both sides, almost exactly the same things happened as at Marston Moor. Cromwell this time commanded on the right wing, but Rupert was placed at the Royalist's right, and was therefore opposed, not to Cromwell, but to Ireton, his son-in-law and second self. Once more the left wing of the Parliament was broken and scattered by the furious charge of the gallant Cavaliers, once more the centre under Fairfax was "sore overpressed" and thrown into confusion, and once more Cromwell and his Ironsides, having ridden down everything that opposed them, swung round behind the rear of the victorious Royalists, swooped in a hurricane of irresistible valour and determination on their flanks and rear, turned defeat into victory and snatched triumph out of disaster.

It is true that even then there seemed so great a chance of the Royalists retrieving the day that Charles, who had put himself at the head of the flower of his cavalry, had thought himself warranted in crying: "One charge more, gentleman, and the days is ours!" But while he was thinking about this, Cromwell, Fairfax, and Ireton had, by the exercise of almost superhuman energy, reformed the whole of their army, horse, foot, and artillery, into complete battle-array on a new front, and against this the fiery valour of the Cavaliers dashed itself in vain.

Once more valour with generalship had conquered valour without it. The defeat was utter and crushing. For fourteen long miles the pursuit went on and only stayed when the walls of Leicester were in sight. The King's army was utterly destroyed and he himself never again appeared at the head of a force in the field.

During the twelve months that followed we see the erstwhile Farmer of Huntingdon in a new light as the beseiger and reducer of strong places. His methods were logical, effective and, we may fairly add, pitiless. Those days were not these any more than William the Norman's or Edward Longlegs' were Cromwell's, and moreover we must remember that he had set himself with all the strength of his mighty nature to stamping the plague of civil war out of the Three Kingdoms with such dispatch as was possible, and it had got to be done speedily, for outside were the enemies of Britain waiting to take advantage of the weakness that this plague might leave her with.

First he summoned the stronghold to surrender, threatening all with the sword. If this is refused he selects his point of attack, batters away at it till he makes a practicable breach, then he gives another chance of surrender, this time with somewhat better terms, but this is the last grace. Refusal now means wave after wave of his irresistible iron and leather-clad soldiery

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pouring into the breach, till at last all opposition is beaten down and then massacre for which, it may be added, he and those with him are never at a loss to find a biblical precedent.

The victories that he won by this method were simply amazing. In about sixteen months he was engaged in some sixty battles and sieges, and took fifty fortified towns and cities with over a thousand pieces of artillery, forty thousand stand of arms, and between two and three hundred colours. The end of this wonderful campaign was the Storm of Bristol. This happened on the tenth and eleventh of September, 1646. As a feat of warfare it is almost incredible. The second city in the kingdom, defended by properly constructed earthworks and fortifications, and garrisoned by four thousand troops with a hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, was stormed and taken with a loss of under two hundred men!

It reads more like one of Drake's insolently valiant attacks upon a Spanish treasure-city than a desperate conflict between Englishmen and Englishmen. There can only be one explanation of it, and that explanation is summed up in the two words: Oliver Cromwell. We are bound to grant that the valour was equal on both sides, but equally we are forced to admit that all the genius and generalship were on one.

Looked at from our point of view, there were terrible blemishes on these triumphs. Every advantage was pursued with the unsparing ferocity which was possible only to religious bigotry fired to a white heat. It is only reasonable to suppose that these Puritan champions of the new faith were fired with just the same furious and pitiless zeal as that which inspired the Israelites in their attack on Canaan, or the first armies of Islam in their assaults on the idolators of the East. They slew and spared not, they hewed their enemies in pieces as Samuel hewed Agag "before the Lord," and they honestly believed that the Lord looked down with approval on them and their bloody work.

Priceless treasures of art were destroyed, not only without remorse, but with grim exultation. To them they were abominations of the heathen, just as the Canaanite idols of silver and gold were to the armies of Israel. But however ferociously it was done, the work was done thoroughly, and by August, 1646, the fall of Ragland Castle following on the surrender of Oxford, brought down the curtain on the first act of the Civil War. Charles gave himself up to the Scots at Newark, and Oliver turned to fight the enemies of his own household.

The chief of these enemies, curiously enough, was that same Parliament in whose name he had won all his brilliant triumphs, and a conflict, very interesting to the student of humanity, now began between the Man of Action and one of those Talking Machines which the good Earl Simon some four centuries before had found so singularly ineffective.

The King's infantry were cut to pieces.

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There is no need to tell in detail how the struggle went. Everyone knows how Cromwell preached and prayed and stormed at the self-sufficient busybodies who thought themselves a power in the land because they called themselves a parliament. Then, seeing that no other method would stop their gabble, he brought in his soldiers and turned them out to talk in the streets or wherever else they could get anyone to listen to them, while he went on with his work.

It is not very many years since Thomas Carlyle, who perhaps understood Cromwell better than any other man not living in his own age, was walking over Westminster Bridge with a very distinguished British officer one night, when the mother of Parliaments was busy tearing her hair and rending her garments over some wordy futility or other, and, jerking his thumb towards the lighted windows, he said: "Ah, my lord, I should like to see the good day when you would go in there with a file of Grenadiers as old Noll did with his dragoons, and clear that nest of cacklers out. Maybe the nation would get some of its business *done* then instead of only getting it talked about."

From this there is a certain moral to be drawn by the wise. For my own part I should dearly love to know with what words old Noll himself would have answered the Sage of Chelsea.

The payment of the Scots' arrears by the Parliament, their surrender of the king—who, by the way, was a great deal stronger in helpless captivity than he had ever been at the head of an army—and his seizure by Cromwell through the instrumentality of Cornet Joyce and his troop of horse, now led up to a very singular situation. Cromwell, the conqueror, went over to the side of Charles Stuart the captive, and if it had not been for that fatal twist in the king's moral nature, there is no telling but that he might have been re-seated on a throne supported and surrounded by the pikes and sabres of the Ironsides.

But unhappily for him, it was not in Charles Stuart's nature to "go straight," and, in the end, after Cromwell had faced and quelled a mutiny among his own men on his account, he discovered that the king was playing him false, that he did not honestly wish to follow his policy of "healing and settling," but only to regain his freedom and try the hazard of battle again.

From that moment Cromwell was his unsparing enemy. Now he saw in Charles "The Man of Blood" who, for the sake of a personal aspiration and for personal profit, was eager to once more set his subjects by the ears and light the flame of war from end to end of the country.

West and South and North the Loyalists were arming and rising again and the Scots were marching across the Border, so the Man of Destiny stopped talking and preaching, buckled on his sword and strode out to battle once more.

The first rising was in Wales, and that he crushed as promptly as he did pitilessly. Then he turned with a weary and war-worn army of some seven thousand men, so wasted with marching and privation and sickness that, as a record of the time tells us, "they seemed rather fit for a hospital than a battle," to face the invading Scots in the North.

He met them at Preston. They were three to one—or rather, to be more exact, twenty-four thousand to seven thousand—well armed and found and confident of victory. Yet never did the military genius of the great Oliver shine out more brilliantly than now. What followed was not a battle; it was an onset, a chase, and a massacre which lasted three days and extended over some thirty miles of country. When it was over Cromwell wrote in one of those marvellous dispatches of his: "We have quite tired our horses in pursuit of the enemy. We have killed and disabled all their foot and left them only some horse. If my horse could but trot after them I would take them all."

The next act in the swiftly-moving drama was the trial and execution of him who to this day is considered by some to have been a royal martyr, who only exchanged an earthly for a heavenly crown, and by others is looked upon as the man who deliberately made himself guilty of the worst of all national crimes, the crime of civil war. That is a matter for each one to decide according to his own convictions, which, be it noted, some two and a half centuries of argument have not yet altered. Here we are only concerned with Cromwell's share in it.

There can be no doubt to an unbiassed mind that at one period he honestly tried for a monarchical settlement of the difficulty. It is equally undeniable that he considered Charles's double-dealing responsible for what he held to be the unpardonable crime of the Second Civil War and therefore as having incurred for a second time the guilt of blood. That the execution, or murder, of the king met with his entire approval cannot be doubted, since before it happened he said to Algeron Sidney: "I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown upon it."

So, whether crime or act of justice, it was done, and Cromwell, perhaps more than anyone else, was responsible for it.

The next act is the Dictatorship, and the first scene in it the re-conquest of Ireland, with its massacres and bitter, pitiless persecutions in revenge or punishment, as you will, for other massacres which had gone before. It is a piteous story, and one of no great credit to anyone, but, to borrow the maxim of Strafford, the former tyrant of Ireland, it was "thorough." In nine months with about fifteen thousand men, the Dictator had stamped the Irish rebellion out and made "the curse of Cromwell," a phrase that will dwell on Hibernian lips for many a generation.

But no sooner was the Irish revolt drowned in blood and flame than Prince Charles, afterwards Charles II. of infamous memory, took the Oath to the Covenant, and the Scots rose to support him. Cromwell crossed the Border on July 22nd, 1650.

As it happened the Scottish general was Leslie, the old comrade who had fought at his side at Marston Moor. For some weeks the Scots played a waiting game, and Cromwell, with his men wearied and falling sick, and with no other base than his ships on the coast, hurled texts and biblical harangues at the enemy. In fact, as Mr. Harrison cleverly puts it, "it was not so much a battle between two armies as between two rival congregations in arms."

Leslie and his preachers fired other texts back at him and kept out of his way until the fatal 3rd of September came. By this time Cromwell had only eleven thousand men capable of bearing arms and they were in no great state for fighting. Leslie had twenty-two or three thousand Scots and all the advantage of the position, but the Fates had already taken the matter into their own hands. On the afternoon of the 2nd Cromwell saw that the wary Scot, as some say, driven by the frantic exhortation of the preachers, had forsaken his post of vantage. "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands!" he cried, and straightway began to set his battle in order.

The next morning, while it was yet moonlight, they

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came to blows. In an hour or so it was all over. The Scots fled in utter panic and confusion, "being made by the Lord of Hosts as stubble to our swords," to use Oliver's own words. When the rout was at its height the sun rose, scattering the morning mists. "Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!" he shouted exultantly through the roar of the battle, and then—how characteristic it was of the man!—he halted his army in the very moment of triumph and sang the one hundred and seventeenth psalm, beginning: "O praise the Lord all ye people for His merciful kindness is great towards us!" Then he unleashed his bloodhounds again and the rest was massacre.

Another year passed in miscellaneous fighting and arguing, slaughter and psalm singing, and once more the sun of the 3rd of September, Cromwell's Day of Fate, or, as Byron puts it:

His day of double victory and death,

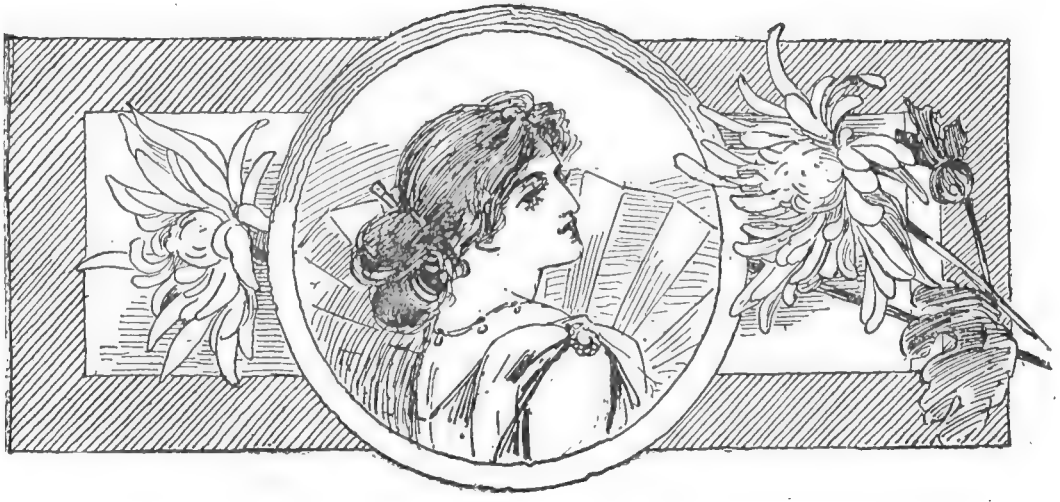
dawned, this time over Worcester, the scene of "the Crowning Mercy." The same miracles of generalship were accomplished, the same tremendous victory was won at a ridiculously small expense—under two hundred men to conquer an entrenched army of fifteen thousand—and this was the end of the fighting at home.

But meanwhile there was fighting abroad, and, more than that, the fame of the great Oliver and his marvellous doings had been ringing from end to end of Europe. As Clarendon, the historian of the Royalists, candidly admits: "His greatness at home was but a shadow of the glory he had abroad." The mastery of the seas was wrenched out of the hands of the Dutch by Drake, the sea-power of England was organised as its land-power was, and Britain rose at a bound from the degradation to which she had sunk under the first Stuart to the proud position of the first naval and military Power of the world, and the greatest ministers and monarchs in Europe, even the Pope himself, were forced to respect the prowess and cringe for the friendship of the Farmer of Huntingdon.

If, as has been aptly suggested, the great Oliver could have lived to an age which is now a normal one for statesmen, the disgraceful and ruinous interval occupied by the reigns of the second Charles and the second James might have been spared with all their infamy and national loss, and William of Orange might worthily have continued the work which Cromwell so well began. But the time was not yet and so it was not to be. The great ideal of his life, a Protestant alliance, was never realised. His last days were days of darkness and suffering, social, mental, and physical.

Once more the Day of Fate came round, and between three and four in the afternoon the watchers by his bedside heard him sigh deeply and heavily. Some say that he whispered: "My work is done"—and then he died. This may be fact or fancy, but, be that as it may, no man had a better right to pass out of the mystery of the things that are into the mystery of the things that are to be with such words on his lips than Oliver Cromwell, General, Statesman, and King in everything but the empty name.

(Next Week, "William of Orange."



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By Fred Whishaw.

Author of "A Boyar of the 'Terrible.'"

SUMMARY.

The story is told by a 'Varsity man, who, seeking adventure, joins Jameson in his raid against the Matabeles. During a brush with the enemy, Joe Wright, a fellow trooper, meets with his death-wound, and, before expiring, bequeaths a satchel containing his life history and the revelation of a wonderful secret to the narrator, who continues the story in the words of the written confession of his dead comrade. Some years previously, Wright had been a private in a Royal Rifle regiment, stationed in Rajpore, India. He and three companions made a midnight raid on a Hindoo temple, in order to steal a diamond of exceptional value and beauty, situated in the forehead of an idol.

CHAPTER IV.

A Fearful End.

Johnny laughed when he drew the winning lot, and said that luck had come in his way for once.

"Give us the chisel, Alf!" he said, "and I'll have the thing out in two shakes."

"Be careful, Johnny," I warned him; "remember what Miles told us about this idol. He says it's generally known that the Joss can take good care of itself; there may be something in it!"

"Rot!" exclaimed Johnny contemptuously. "The priests spread a report of that kind about to save themselves trouble. Why, don't you see they'd have to watch the blooming thing night and day if it wasn't for the funk they've established about it? They're paid for watching, too, you may bet, and they prefer going home to bed. I'm not afraid. Give us the chisel, Alf!"

"There isn't smoke without a fire somewhere!" I persisted.

"Rats!" said Johnny irreverently; whereat we all laughed, and Hitchins gave him the chisel.

Whether I live for fifty years or but one night from the moment I write these lines, I shall never forget the next scene. That dark heathen temple, and the hideous, cross-legged gods squatting around and about us in every direction—some scowling savagely at us, others seeming to smile with malicious delight as we stood and plotted against the well-being of their principal and chieftain, and everyone of them looking all the more diabolically malevolent and repulsive in the dim light that our lanterns shed about the place.

Johnny did not seem to realise any of the creepiness and horror that I felt. His was a joyous, devil-may-care kind of temperament that would never give way even for a moment to "the blues." He never knew what fear was, did dear old Johnny Phelps, but took one thing with another, accepting everything that destiny brought him with a laugh and a joke, and making light of the most dangerous and difficult matters that others would look grave over. Lord! you should have seen him, as I did, in some of those little frontier wars we were engaged in at that time—fasting, hemmed in in passes—it was all the same to him; he was the life and soul of the rest of us. Poor old Johnny! But my thoughts are running away with me, as they do sometimes, and I must get back to that Joss-house and the idol.

Johnny took the chisel and mallet.

"How am I going to get at him?" he said, laughing.

"Go carefully up and stand on that kind of prayer-carpet in front of him; that's probably where the Johnnies kneel before him," said Jake. "Go carefully, though, in case he lets out at you when you come near."

"Yes, go carefully, for goodness' sake!" I added. I don't know how it was, but my heart was full of a kind of terror, and I wished a hundred times that night that we had never come out on this godless job.

"Oh, I'll go carefully, right enough, don't you make any mistake about that!" laughed Johnny.

"Be ready to jump backwards if you hear any kind of a rumble or creaking!" said Alf. "I'll bet the old boy won't move much without his machinery creaking; it isn't as if chaps came and woke him up every day."

In deference, I suppose, to our advice, Johnny felt his way step by step towards the pedestal on which sat the big idol; he did so with apparent caution, though I do not believe he felt any anxiety. Still, he crawled on, pressing down each foot in turn with a "Woa, Emma!" or a "Steady along, there!" and making sure of each foothold before trusting the whole weight of his body to it.

So he reached the little prayer-carpet that lay before the pedestal, and stopped upon it a moment to pass us a comical bow and a wave of the arm.

"Safe, so far!" said Johnny; "now then, you ugly old varmint, how'm I going to get at your third eye?" he continued; "guess I'd better gouge it out best way I can, what say you, mates?"

"See if it's firm in, or only in a sort of setting," suggested Alf; "it looks to me as if it sat in a kind of hole, pretty loose, and the stone around not touching it."

"Lord! so it is!" said Johnny, looking closer; "there's a rim of space all round it—my! don't it glitter! What'll we do with it when we've got it?"

He fell over me.

"Keep jolly quiet till we get to England!" said Jake, whose whole frame shook with excitement, as I could plainly see; as for myself, my teeth were all a-chatter; but then I felt in a real old superstitious terror, such as I had never experienced before.

"Well, here goes!" said Johnny.

He inserted his chisel in the chink that encircled the diamond, feeling here and there for resistance, but finding none.

"It seems to be set in a kind of tube or something," he said, "running straight down into the old boy's head; what's the object of having it that way? Probably if I press it, it'll disappear down the tube; that's where the secret is, depend on it! You touch it and it's gone—and not a bad plan either!"

"Press it gently with your fingers and see," said Jake; "what if it drops down into his stomach? We'll hack the Joss into a jelly but we'll find it again!"

Johnny placed his thumb on the great flashing stone. I remember the moment as though it were yesterday. I remember the feeling of intense excitement that had begun to lay hold of me, the offspring, I dare say, of the example of Jake and Alf Hitchins, both of whom stood by, pale and trembling, fidgeting with impatience and agitation. I remember Johnny laughing as he pressed the diamond with his thumb, and I remember thinking how differently he approached this matter from ourselves—he being full of fun and lightheartedness, regarding the thing as a good lark, and no more, while we were terribly in earnest. I remember thinking all this as he touched the diamond, and then there was a sudden quick movement of something, a slight whirr or grating sound that made us all start back in guilty terror, and where Johnny had stood but a moment before there was no sign of him.

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Jake hoarsely. "What's happened? Where's Johnny?"

"The trap, the trapdoor!" I muttered. "I saw it open under his feet—under the prayer carpet—God have mercy upon us all, let's get out of this awful place!"

"What, without the swag, and without Johnny?" said Jake. "Not I! Lift the prayer carpet, Alf, and we'll prize the thing open—we may be able to get the poor chap out."

"Lift it yourself," said Alf, who was all of a tremble, whether with horror or agitation. "I won't go near the blamed thing."

"Give us a hand then, Joe," resumed Jake—"we shall be all safe if we stand outside the carpet—quickly, the poor chap may be suffocating for all we know!"

We tore up the carpet. Underneath it was a wooden square of about four feet each way let into the tiled floor, but there was no handle to it, or anything that could be grasped to pull it up by. We put the chisel under the sides, here and there, and tugged at it, but in vain—we could make no impression upon it.

"What's to be done?" I gasped. "Will you wait while I run home and fetch a pick or something?"

I looked up as I spoke, and it was as well that I did, for over me stood a tall priest in the act of bringing a curved sword down upon my neck as I knelt at the trapdoor. I don't know where the fellow came from. The others saw him at the same moment, and each—as I dare say I did, too—shouted something inarticulately, and sprang back.

The priest's sword descended, but I had slipped out of the way. He struck at me again, but I darted in this time, and grabbed him round the knees. He fell over me, and we struggled together on the ground.

Whether he lost his sword as he fell or whether Jake Daws possessed himself of it as the Josser and I rolled about I do not know, but Jake got the sword, and presently brought it down upon my antagonist's head just as I had shaken his hands from about my throat, and was on my knees over him ready to scrag him in return.

The priest ceased to struggle. He opened and shut his mouth once or twice, then his legs and arms straightened out, and his jaw fell—he was dead.

"You've killed him, Jake," I said. "Lord forgive you!"

"You fool, it was the only thing to do!" said Jake savagely. "You didn't want him to remain alive and give us all away, did you?"

This certainly would have been awkward.

"Still, it's murder," I said. "You can't get out of that, Jake. Besides, what are we going to do with him now?"

"Why, send him after Johnny," said Jake.

"Stop!" cried Alf. "Don't do anything in a hurry. I've an idea. Why shouldn't we make use of this blamed Josser, Jake, now we've got him? We'll lie him along the prayer carpet, first tying him to the idol with a sash so as he doesn't disappear; then one of you chaps climb up behind the Joss—it'll be safe from there—and press the blooming jewel; down'll go the trap-door, and the priest'll go half way down and stick there with the trap-door half open and half shut. Then we can look and see where Johnny is, and we can fish out the jewel at our leisure, for the blamed thing can't work its spring, or whatever it is, when it's jammed."

"Why, you're a genius, Alf, you infernal coward, after all!" said Jake, with a coarse laugh, and a coarser oath.

"And what's more, we can leave the chap half in and half out, and they'll think he took the diamond and dropped it down the hole when he was caught," I added, forgetting the murder and everything else in the desire to save my own skin.

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"And that's true, too," said Jake; "so come along, my gay sportsman, and do your part in this 'ere play!"

With the words, he dragged his victim to the trap and laid him across it.

"Hold on to him, you Joe," he said, "that's better than tying him up, for we might make a mess of it, and forget to untie him afterwards, so hang on to his foot, and see he don't drag you down. Now, Alf, you blamed funkstick, climb up behind and touch the button, and the figure will work."

"Not I," said Alf, shrinking back, "there may be some infernal murdering trick from that side as well."

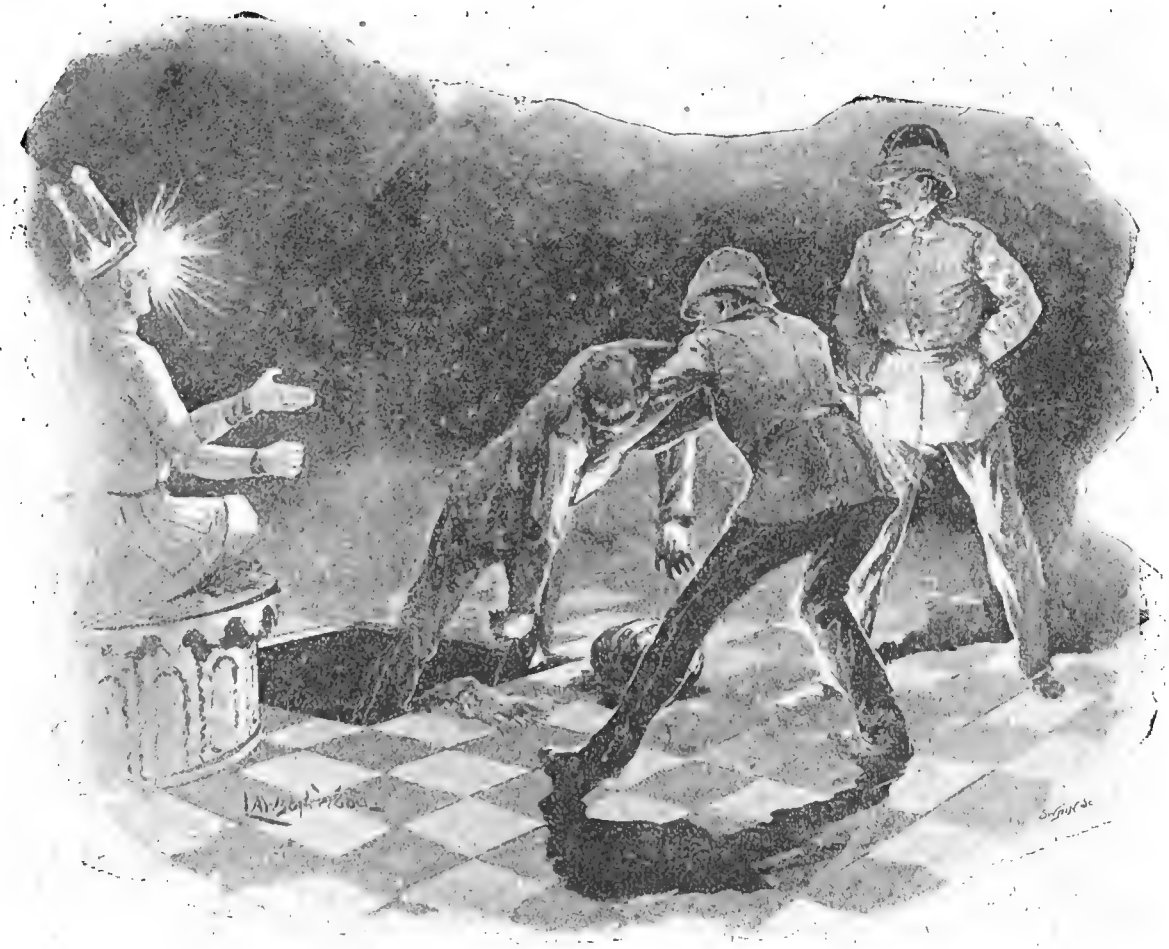
my voice sounded hollow and echo-y, as the voice of a man who speaks down a well.

But there was no answer from Johnny.

CHAPTER V.

The Real Article and the Sham.

Jake took one of the priest's shoes and let it fall through the half-open trap-door, placing his finger to his lip to enjoin silence. It seemed to me that several seconds passed before I heard anything. Then came a splash.



He fainted, even as I pulled his legs out.

"Oh, I see," said Jake, "so that's why one of us was to do the job, is it? Upon my soul, Alf, I'd kick you blue if you was worth it; here, give us the blamed cask-hoop! Hold on to the Josser, Joe, for all you're worth!"

Jake took the sword, and reaching over the carpet, made little dabs at the diamond till he touched it with the sword-point.

Instantly there was the same whirr or creak, the trap opened and the body of the priest slipped downwards, but I had him tightly by the leg, and held on; then the door came back and jammed him fast, leaving an aperture of a foot or so at the side.

I quickly seized a lantern and peered down, hoping to see or hear Johnny. I shouted his name over and over again;

"Ah," said Jake, "I thought so; it's a well. Poor old Phelps; so *he's* gone. Well, anyway, there'll be one less to divide."

"Oh, he *can't* be dead, Jake," I cried, all the horror of the thing suddenly overwhelming me. "Dear old Johnny *can't* be dead, so suddenly and so horribly. For Heaven's sake let's do something to save him. Raise the alarm and get some ladders. I'll go."

I was up, and half-way to the window before Jake laid hold of my shoulder and stopped me.

"Don't go playing the fool, Joe Wright," he said, "or we shall know where to put *you*, and that's where poor Johnny is. He's drowned as dead as a cat by this time, man. You aren't going to sink the ship for a dead man, no,

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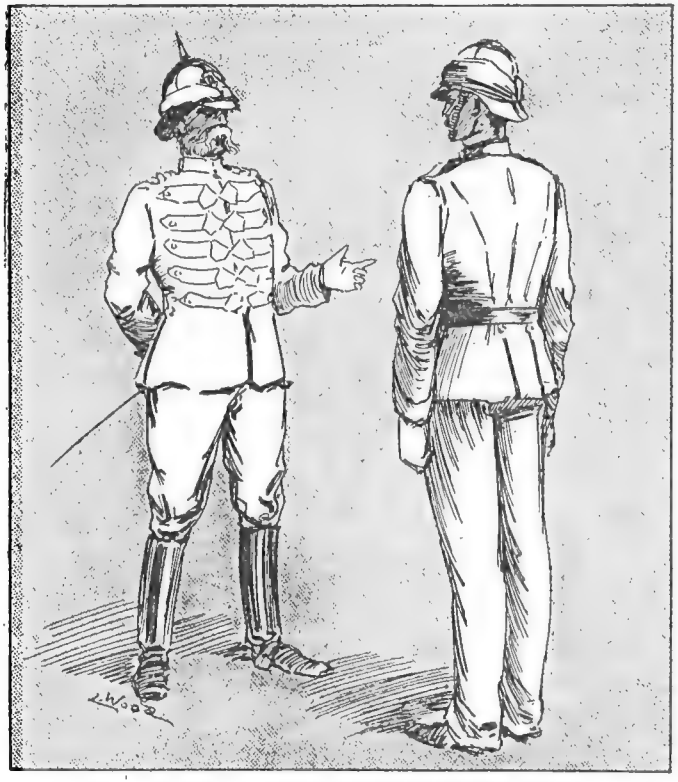
nor for twenty Johnnies, alive or dead. Now you know what Alf Hitchins' and my game is; we've got to keep our necks clear of the rope, sonny, and so have you, so no bloomin' nonsense!"

"I'm as good a man as you, Jake Daws, and perhaps a little better," I said, "and as for Alf, he'd be a good man in a fight if his tongue was a weapon, so I'll have you know that I'm not to be dictated to. Johnny Phelps has got to be saved, I tell you, if he's alive."

"Lord, man, what a fool you are to-day!" said Jake. "Shout down the well again, if you like; do you suppose the chap wouldn't answer if he heard? I tell you he's drowned as dead as the Armada; come, go risking our heads, and your own, too, for a dead man. Johnny Phelps was a good chap, and I'm as sorry for him as you



"Was anything wrong with him?"

are; but dead he is, and that's certain. So be sensible, and we'll have this bloomin' jewel and divide the proceeds, and the Josser here shall get the blame. What say you, Alf?"

"Of course he's dead," Alf assented. "Come, be a man, Joe, and not an infernal fool; you've insulted me to-night, but I forgive you because we can't afford to quarrel now. Besides, if you was to run out like a blooming idiot, and give the alarm, why, I'd have you notice that I've got the sword and would stop your little game in a jiffey!"

I turned contemptuously from Alf Hitchins, and bent over the trap door once again. I called repeatedly down it, entreating Johnny to answer and promising to come down and fetch him if only he'd give tongue; but there was no answering voice, and I was compelled to conclude that he was drowned, or dead some other way, as no doubt he was. At last I abandoned the task.

"There, you see!" said Alf, "now be a sensible chap and stop that rot; what's the next move, Jake—you be skipper, and we'll take our orders from you."

"Well, out with the diamond then, first!" said Daws. "Where's the chisel?"

But the chisel had absolutely disappeared, and I make no doubt that it went down into the *oubliette* with dear old Johnny.

"Take the sword then, you Alf, and dab gently with that; here—stand off the carpet in case of accident—go carefully, and don't chip the jewel; hold on to the Josser, Joe Wright!"

It was as well that I was by. Hardly had Alf touched the big diamond with the point of his sword, than the machine responded instantly. The body of the priest was not thick enough to jam the trap so wide that it would open no further. Alf Hutchins, in sudden terror, overbalanced and stepped upon the priest's body. To save Alf I let go of the dead man, a piece of whose garment came off in my hand, and gripped the live one, nerveless and senseless with abject terror, perhaps pardonably so, for as a matter of fact, he would have followed the priest had I not gripped him just in time, and he was, indeed, half in and half out of the pit. He fainted, even as I pulled his legs out and allowed the trap to close with a bang, having let the sword fall down the well as he stumbled and fell over. Jake laughed aloud.

"By Gum, Joseph, that was a near shave!" he said. "It looked like as if you and I were to divide the swag, my son! Lord! what a fool the man was! Why must he lose his head and the sword too, plague take the idiot! How are we going to get the thing out without it—and the chisel gone too—yes, and the priest, that was going to take all the blame off us! What are we going to do, Joe Wright?"

It was perfectly clear, the idol had beaten us. "We must go home without it!" I said, "and as for the priest, it's just as well he's gone, Jake, for anyone could see that you, or some other murderous villain, had bashed his head in."

"I call that grateful, now!" said Jake, "considering that I saved your life from him!" This was not true, for I had the fellow at my mercy when Jake struck. "However," he added, "it's true the wound would have been seen, and I don't suppose the other Jossers believe that the old idol could have let fly at him, though the general public might."

"Anyhow, there's a bit of his robe sticking out of the trap now!" I said, "so he'll be the suspected party after all!"

"Good!" Jake assented; "then come, let's clean up a bit, and as soon as Alf revives we'll be off for the present; but we'll have that diamond one day, sonny, you see if we don't!"

Hitchins came round presently, and having tidied up the place we all three took our departure, Jake turning to shake his fist at the idol before he climbed to the window:

"Ah, you infernal old villain!" he said, "we're a-coming back, don't you make any mistake! We ain't done with you and your bloomin' one eye yet, not by a longish bit!"

We had no difficulty in getting safely into quarters after this escapade that ended so tragically for poor Johnny; but there was necessarily considerable excitement in the regiment over the disappearance of our unfortunate companion. It was very awkward for me, personally, because the Colonel, knowing that Johnny was a particular friend of mine, examined me pretty closely as to whether I knew anything about him.

Naturally I was obliged to say that I did not know what had become of him, though I supposed he must have

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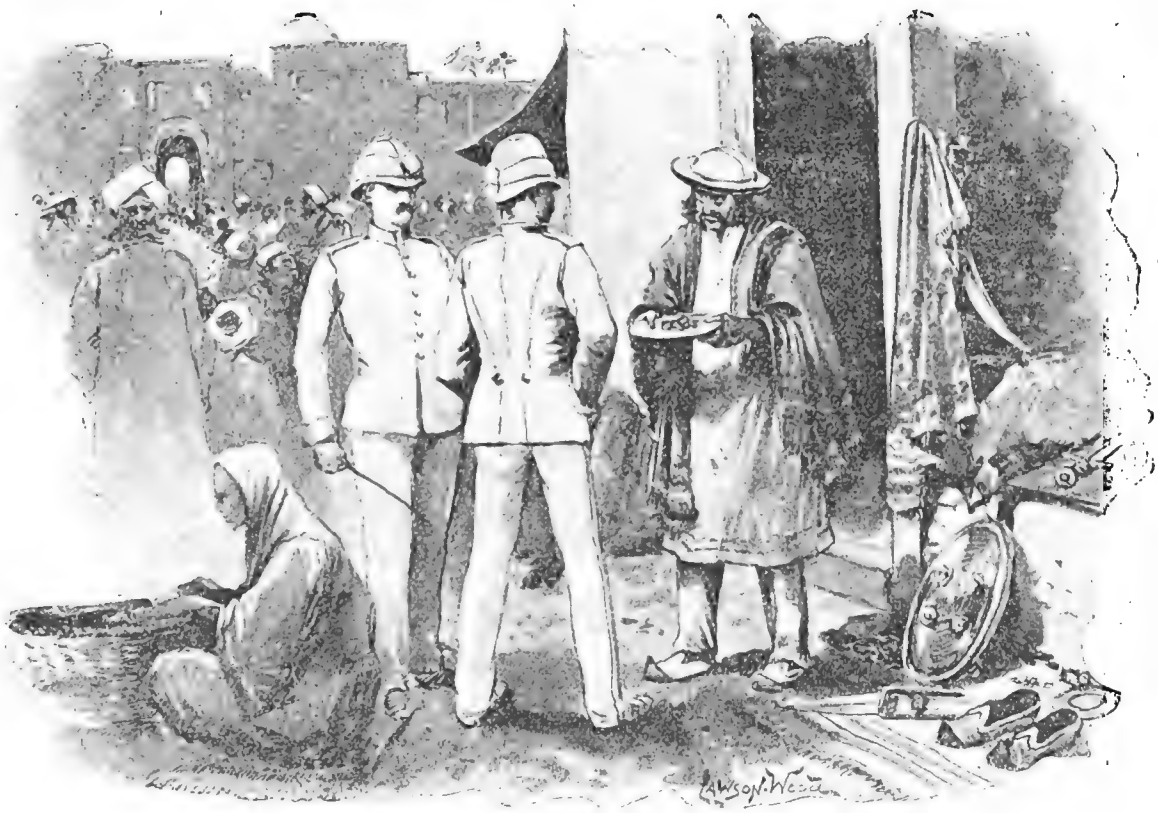

The man produced a saucer filled with counterfeit gems.

deserted for some reason of his own. I trotted out this theory because it was the popularly received explanation of his disappearance, as held by the regiment in general.

"But why—*why* should the poor fellow desert, and the regiment so soon going home again?" asked the Colonel, puzzled—and no wonder—to account for the mysterious affair. "Was anything wrong with him? Was he discontented? Did he imagine himself unfairly treated? Was there any love trouble?" The poor colonel fired a whole string of suggestions at me in his desperation. I caught at the last. I said Johnny *had* got himself into rather hot water, having promised—in one of his reckless moments—to marry a native Mohammedan girl whom he pretended to adore and who adored him without any pretence at all. This girl, I said, had lately worried him to carry out his promise which, as a matter of fact, Johnny never had the slightest idea of doing, and had threatened to make things pretty unpleasant for poor Johnny with his officers if he did not act up to his word before leaving the place for Bombay and England.

This proved a good idea on my part, and seemed to satisfy and somewhat amuse the Colonel, who nevertheless gave orders for a hue-and-cry to be raised, in hopes of finding our poor drowned Johnny. The girl was also questioned, but had nothing to disclose as to her faithless swain, and eventually the search was abandoned and the usual notices issued describing Johnny's appearance, and calling upon all men to hand him over, if found, to outraged authority.

Meanwhile my confederates and I consulted often enough as to our next move, for I may as well confess that, greatly as I now hated both Jake and Alf for the cold-blooded murderers they were, yet I quite realised that I was myself an accessory, and therefore as guilty as they, or near it, and as much in their power to destroy as they in mine. Moreover, in spite of the horror I still felt whenever I acted over again that night's work in the temple, and thought of poor Johnny precipitated into that hideous pit and drowned without hope of succour, yet whenever I recalled the splendid, flashing gem in the forehead of the idol, that evil thing that had been the cause of all this horror and crime and misfortune, I felt that, in spite of everything, I must return and renew the attempt to possess myself of it.

Both Jake and Alf Hitchins were at least equally fascinated and determined to achieve where we had all failed, and many were the consultations we held as to how and when this was to be effected.

One afternoon I walked with Jake through the native bazaars of the town close to which our barracks were situated.

Suddenly Jake jogged my arm.

"Look there, Joe! See the little idol on the bracket there?" he whispered. "That's a miniature of our sportsman up at the temple!"

I looked, and with a shock I recognised it immediately; there it sat, a little, devilish, complacent idol of six inches in height, but fashioned beautifully, in exact imitation of its huge original, down to the very expression of the face, and to the gem in its forehead, which was, of course, a minute specimen, by comparison, and probably a dummy diamond at that.

"Lord, I must have that!" said Jake.

We asked the price of the idol, and inquired what it represented.

The native, whose property it was, then launched out and gave us, in mixed language, a long account of the great idol of which this was a copy. He informed us that there

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was a mystery connected with the god, who was known to punish instantly and terribly those who attempted to touch the magnificent diamond, which was the pride of the temple, and was placed, just like this little one, in his forehead.

"Only lately," he continued, speaking mysteriously and in a whisper, as though he imparted to us a secret which no one else should be privileged to hear, "only lately one of the priests in charge of the temple had been guilty of an attempt to rob the idol, for which sacrilege he had been instantly slain by the god." I asked how this was known. "Because there was nothing left of him but a portion of his garment," said the man, "and a stain of blood on the floor; the rest of him, it is said, disappeared utterly; truly it is an awful thing to offend this great god!"

"That must be a wonderful jewel to tempt a priest to risk his own destruction," said Jake, who never turned a hair, though I felt that I was pale and trembling; "what is the size of it?"

The man produced a saucer filled with counterfeit gems of the exact size and appearance of the real diamond, for the possession of which we were already bartering our souls.

"There," he said, "these are the *fac-simile* of the Eye of the Sun" (these are not his exact words), "I sell hundreds of them. Every English Sahib that comes to the town carries one away with him."

"I'll take one," said Jake, and take one he did, choosing a lovely specimen; and—as I hope to be forgiven—no one who was not an expert could have said it was not a real diamond. We did not buy the model of the idol, however, being too absorbed by this new thing to remember it.

The artificial gem cost us, I think, a rupee and a half—it makes me laugh to think of it, in spite of everything!

CHAPTER VI.

We Lift the Big Jewel.

"What did you buy the thing for?" I asked Jake as we walked down the street.

"Why, to make a swop, to be sure, with the real article. This one will suit the old Joss equally as well, and we'll take the liberty of having the other. As for the sportsmen that go there to pray and clean up the place and so on, *they'll* never know the difference, I lay a dollar; they won't suspect it's a dummy, and if they did find out, we should be thousands of miles away by that time."

This was a pretty good idea of Jake's, who was no fool, though a first-class rascal.

That night we two and Alf held a serious consultation. There was but a week now before we should leave the place for ever and sail for England; it was time we made our *coup*.

Therefore the following evening was fixed upon for our renewed attempt, for which we had gradually prepared during the past few weeks, Jake having collected; that is, certain articles and hidden them in the grove that surrounded the temple. There was a large sack, full of rubbish, designed to perform the part of victim to the god's diabolical mechanical revenge. Then there were powerful pincers and a chisel and a brace, all of which we took with us, and lastly, a sword-bayonet which Jake insisted upon wearing.

"Come now, Jake," I said, "no more murders; one's enough."

"Oh, *rats!*" said he. "Self-preservation's the first law. The Jossers had best stay away, and not come poking around on tiptoe from nowhere, if they want to preserve whole skins. What would you do, mate, if one came around while you were there? Not leave him with all our secrets in his hands, *I* know. You'd stab him as soon as I would."

"I wouldn't!" I said. "No murdering for me!"

"All right, then," said Jake, "we'll see. Perhaps there'll be another Josser, and perhaps there won't. I shall be interested to know how you propose to act if he does turn up, supposing he's not to be knocked on the head."

"Sufficient for the day," said I weakly, for, as a matter of fact, I did not see any way out of the difficulty excepting that which Jake indicated—always supposing that another priest should turn up; but, as Jake presently suggested, probably for my consolation, it was likely that no watch would be kept upon the idol since his last achievement, for it was now abundantly evident that the god was quite able to look after himself!

That night found us safely within the temple—Jake, Alf Hitchins, and myself—together with the paraphernalia we had brought with us, including two steel bars of some eighteen inches in length with which we proposed "to hold

Something struck my legs from under me.

the Joss's mouth open, so as he couldn't bite," as Jake picturesquely expressed it, meaning by this that we purposed to hold the trap door wide with them while we worked away at the diamond.

However, since—with all our precautions—there would still be some risk for the actual worker, we drew lots for the post of honour. We did this with three matches, each cutting off a piece of a match and placing it in a cap; then having shaken the cap to mix the matches, we each drew one, the shortest to have the dangerous job.

Jake and Alf both drew before me, and I have always thought, though I said nothing at the time, that they cheated me, pretending to feel about in the cap for the matches while in reality they were measuring them by the touch; anyhow, I was left with the shortest, and the job fell to me.

I did not like it, for besides the danger of the thing itself, I had no confidence in my associates. I felt that they doubted and distrusted me, and would not be sorry if something were to befal me akin to that which befel Johnny; therefore I kept a sharp look-out the while I worked.

First I went behind the idol, and pressed inwards his jewel-eye, the "Glory of Rajpore" as we now knew it was called, as well as "The Eye of the Sun."

Instantly the trap opened, sank, and closed again with a snap.

"Woa, a bit, sonny!" cried Jake, "I wasn't quick enough!"

I repeated the performance. This time Jake slipped his

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sack in, preventing the reclosing of the trap, which now yawned wide, and remained so. Alf handed the steel bars, and with these Jake quickly jammed the thing in its present position.

"Glory!" he ejaculated, when this was done; "now work for all you're worth, Joe Wright, for the thing's as safe as a church."

I now stood close to the trap, but beyond it, and touched the spring a second time, but there was no result; Jake's arrangement had succeeded in rendering the diabolical machinery of the god harmless.

Then I started working in earnest. I was pretty nimble with my fingers, and presently I had loosened the diamond by working under it with my chisel. Very soon after this I had it safely in my hand. It had rested, I now saw, in a kind of cup at the upper end of the tube, which communicated with a spring which worked the infernal machinery. I cannot describe the thrill I felt, holding that diamond for the first time in the palm of my hand; it seemed to set me afire, head to foot.

"Hand down the swag!" said Jake, "and take this dummy gem."

"Lord!" he continued, as I obediently handed down the glorious jewel; "Lord! why, it's as exactly like the other as two peas. See, here, Alf—ain't it a wonder! Take the dummy, Joe, and stick it in where this one was!"

While I was doing this Jake and Alf conversed, but in such very low tones that I could catch nothing of their observations.

I succeeded in fixing the dummy jewel easily enough. It was a simple arrangement, and all I had to do was to push the base of it well into the socket, and then jam the edges of the tubing over it. I had the whole thing fixed up in a few minutes.

"Hold on a minute and see if the blooming mouse-trap works first," said Jake.

He removed the supports, and the trap banged up to the floor level. I touched the diamond and the machinery worked easily, that is, the trap opened and shut again with a whirr and a bang, just as it had when it swallowed poor Johnny.

"Try it once more, so as to be sure," said Jake.

Just then, even as I placed my finger upon the spring to work the trap, it occurred to me what a fool I had been to let Jake hold the big diamond while I stood in this position; if I had held it or put it in my pocket until the job was finished, I should have been perfectly safe against any murderous tricks he might play me, whereas now—if it were to occur to him—he had me more or less at his mercy. He and Alf together could easily push me suddenly upon the fatal spot as I touched the spring, and in a moment I should be dashed to the bottom of the pit, like Johnny.

It has taken several minutes to explain this sudden terror of mine, but the idea flashed through my brain in the thirtieth part of a second.

At the very same instant something struck my legs from under me, and I fell forwards, knocking my forehead against the idol's pedestal, and subsiding on the floor with a large part of my body across the trap-door. Owing, I suppose, to the inspiration of terror that had darted through my mind, or mistrust of Jake, I had not pressed the spring, and to this fact I doubtless owe my life.

I sprang to my feet and confronted Jake, catching hold of him by both shoulders and shaking him to and fro.

"Explain, if you can, you infernal blackguard," I said, "before I smash you."

"Let go, you fool," said Jake, laughing, but looking very wickedly. "You were standing with a foot on the trap, wasn't he, Alf? You'd have been in in another second if I hadn't pulled you back."

Alf assented.

I knew it was a lie, and that the blackguards had meant to murder me, but I thought it better to pretend that this explanation satisfied me. After all I had gained much by the episode, for I now knew for certain that this precious pair were minded to get me out of the syndicate and divide the proceeds of our enterprise by two instead of three parts. And since this was the state of affairs it was just as well to know it.

So I stared him in the face a while, as though weighing his words, and presently let go of him with a laugh, and said if that had been so it was all right, and I begged his pardon.

"Granted, mate," he replied, "but, Lord love you, what a fellow you are to suspect a friend. Why, what should I gain by murdering you, do you suppose?"

"Well now, upon my life it struck me that you might be doing it for the sake of a bit of extra gain," I laughed, "but I see, now I think of it, that it couldn't have been that, for a third part of the value of this little Glory of Rajpore will keep a man nicely for the rest of his days without his having to murder a friend to make it a half!"

"Why, that's the very truth, my son!" said Jake heartily, "and you go and suspect an innocent party of a crime he'd scorn to commit, and hadn't had no idea of committing. It's too bad."

"Well, shake hands on it!" I said. "It's all right now," and so I shook hands with my would-be murderer, knowing him to be so, but making belief I had no suspicion; and presently, having left the place as tidy and clean as we had found it, and the big Joss grinning away as complacently, with the dummy in his forehead, as though he still wore the Eye of the Sun there, we took our departure and got safely home to quarters with our big prize in hand.

I spent the remaining portion of that night in pondering deeply upon my position. I may say that I honestly wished to Heaven that I was out of the whole business with its horrible tale of dishonesty and crime and the detestable evil conscience that attended such things. But in it I was and in it I must remain, and since I could not escape the disagreeables of the position, I was determined that I would see to it that I reaped my fair share of the advantages of it.

Now I was convinced before everything that Jake's ultimate intention in this matter was to have the entire profit to himself, and that he would either rid himself of me or of my company as a preliminary step to that end, and I racked my brain to devise some plan by which to defeat his projects, as I understood them.

The upshot of my cogitations was an odd one. I visited the bazaar on the following morning and bought a second *fac-simile* of the Eye of the Sun.

(To be continued next week.)

YOU CANNOT

Find a more interesting paper for Sunday reading than *The Sunday Reader*. This week's number is particularly good. There are competitions, and amongst the prizes is a magnificent

TEN-GUINEA SINGER SEWING MACHINE.

The contents of this week's *Sunday Reader* include an interview with Lady Henry Somerset, the Opinions of Prominent Preachers on the Immortality of Animals, Anecdotes and Stories of Queen Victoria, an illustrated article about a Tomb with Eighteen Effigies, a picture of a Minister who Preaches in Policeman's Costume. In addition there are scores of articles, anecdotes, and stories of a most interesting character, and the paper is illustrated profusely throughout.

Every Thursday. **The Sunday Reader.** *One Penny.*

One Sinner Repenteth.

We paused upon a ledge of rock and looked down into the valley. A beautiful valley looked away from the great world by mellow ranges of encircling hills. Soft symphonies in colour, chain upon chain they rose and linked themselves with the uncertain blue of east and west. Green meadow slopes led to a shining upland, bright with autumn's harvest.

As we seated ourselves upon the trunk of a tree, felled by lightning in a recent storm, Charles Dysart began this story:

"Three years since my wife and I wintered in the South of France; on our way home we stopped at Paris. The evening after our arrival we attended a ball given by friends at their new house in the Bois de Boulogne.

"The affair was notable: everyone of wit, wealth, birth or beauty was present; the drawing-rooms were thronged with representatives of every creed and clime. In the midst of this brilliant assemblage my wife was conspicuous for her loveliness, and her rare gifts of language drew about her a score of diplomats.

"Next morning, the papers contained elaborate descriptions of the function and dwelt with admiration upon my wife's dress—her jewels inspired especial comment.

"I laid aside my paper and looked out of the window. My eye rested upon the tender green of early budding trees. The spirit of spring was everywhere—it seemed to tincture my very soul—and there came upon me a longing to leave the town.

"'Louise,' I said, 'let us spend the day at St. Cloud.' She acquiesced with an almost childish show of pleasure, and soon we were on our way to the lovely spot.

"The end of a happy day found us back in the capital, aglow with happiness. Something, however, followed, close upon our return, which diverted our thoughts.

"We found our apartment as we had left it. The morning papers lay in confusion upon the table, our books and other paraphernalia were undisturbed.

"As we contemplated dining out, my wife at once went to her room to prepare her toilet. She was slightly fatigued and said, as she left me:

"'I dislike to wait upon myself; it was a mistake to send Alphonsine on ahead;' and I was coward enough to answer:

"'I told you so.'

"Then she left me with reproach written upon her face, and I picked up some unanswered letters with a determination to do my duty. In a few moments I was aroused from my task by a stifled scream. I hurried to the door crying:

"'What is the matter?'

"Louise stood in the centre of her room, pale and trembling, scattered about her in all directions lay the contents of two empty trunks.

"'My jewels!' she gasped.

"'What of them?'

"'They are all gone!'

"For a moment I stood transfixed and mute before her.

"My memory is not quite clear as to what we did during the ensuing hour. Of course, we summoned the manager of the hotel, who behaved very well and offered to do all in his power to facilitate the recovery of our chattels.

"He, however, pointed out the fact that we had neglected to deposit our valuables in the safe which the hotel provided for that purpose, and called our attention to notices to that effect in all the rooms of our suite. He declared that the hotel could not be held responsible. The notice of our loss was sent to police headquarters, and detectives were immediately set to work upon the case.

"Louise and I were late for dinner. The evening was a blank to me.

"The remaining days of our sojourn we devoted to seeking our belongings. A suitable reward was offered and a description of the missing trinkets telegraphed to all parts of the country, but at every point the police were baffled, and in the end we came away without a clue or the least hope of recovering our property.

"A month later I was seated in my den in Park Lane when the butler informed me that a man wished to see me.

"'His card,' I said absently, not raising my eyes from the magazine before me.

"'If you please, sir, he is not the kind that would have a card, sir.'

"'A beggar?'

"'Looks like it, sir.'

"'Why did you let him in? Have I not told you that I cannot receive such people?'

"'I did not let him in, he said he would wait upon the steps.'

"'It is impossible for me to see him, Caulkins. In future you must be more careful.'

"'But he seems very anxious and worried, and says that you alone can save his soul, sir.'

"'Distress,' I exclaimed, flinging the book from me, realising with impatience the feeling of selfishness which had at first prompted me to turn him from the door—'distress shall always find a friend in me.' I advanced to the hall, bidding Caulkins admit the man.

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"He came in, shuffling and shy. He was undersized and ill-favoured, having a motley collection of strangely assorted features. He wore shabby clothes of the coarsest make. When he spoke I was struck with the singular beauty of his voice, which was refined and musical, like a skilfully-tuned stringed instrument.

"'Pardon me for intruding upon you,' he began, 'I come to make a sad heart happy by giving to a worthy man his own.'

"His words surprised me.

"'What do you want?' I asked.

"'To speak with you alone.'

"There was a persuasive quality in the tone that made his request a command.

"I assented, and led him into the billiard-room. When he entered, he looked hurriedly around him with a mistrustful glance, then he abruptly closed the door and locked it.

"'May I examine the cupboards?' he asked, slowly and sweetly, like an obedient child suing for some trifling indulgence.

"I was too stupefied to reply. He opened the cupboards, inspected them, and then investigated the wide fireplace, after which he seemed entirely satisfied.

"'Mr. Dysart,' he said, 'now that we are alone I can speak. I feared to approach the subject before any one, as it is of a purely confidential character.'

"He leant forward with both arms upon the billiard-table and looked at me very earnestly. I then noticed that there were tears glistening in his eyes.

"'Mr. Dysart, I am—a thief.'

"My heart throbbed violently, not from fear, but from a sensation of poignant pain which his voice awakened. The announcement ended in a muffled sob. Instinctively I murmured: 'Poor soul.'

"'Thank you, God bless you, for those words!' The way in which he uttered this would have softened a stone.

"'I have come to you, because you are honoured among men, because in my darkness, in the depths of evil, I have watched your unselfish devotion to mankind; and for years I have longed to come once, face to face with you and pour out my soul. Others have tried to help me, but they have failed. Their narrow charity and intolerant virtue stung into life my worst passions, and rebellious, unredeemed, I left them—still a sinner.'

"His voice broke with emotion.

"'Charles Dysart, you can save me. Listen: I was born in a hillside hamlet of Berkshire, on an old farm where my people for generations had dwelt in peace and consecrated their simple lives to honest toil. I was one of many children, and my boyhood was mainly spent in taking honey to market, as my father owned an apiary. I suppose you never heard of Silverdeen honey? Ah! it was sweet as innocence! I was a shiftless lad and wayward, but never wicked. When I was sixteen my father died, and some of us went to work. That was the beginning of the end. A country lad, I came to the city to get employment, and I went to the bad. Evil companions, bad examples, and my own weak nature, have made me what I am.'

"Here a violent cough seized him, and when he had succeeded in controlling it he was pale from the wrenching he had sustained. In acknowledgment of some proffered remedy, he smiled faintly and said:

"'Oh, no matter about the cough, it is an old story. I have a weak lung.'

"After a pause he went on. 'My mother is still living, and I want to see her—you can't know how much I long to hear her voice. She is very old and blind, and she has prayed all these years that her lost sheep might be found. Some weeks ago I wrote to the postmaster and asked for news of her. His answer made me wish to go home, for in it he said—he is a good man and verger of the old church where I prayed as a child—"There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth."'

"I went forward and held out my hand. 'Let me be a friend to you,' was all I could say. There was a strange yearning look in the man's face, as he checked his impulse to take my hand, replying: 'Don't tempt me. I cannot take your hand until I have earnt the right to touch it, and I have not yet finished my story.

"'Six weeks ago you were in Paris. I stole your wife's jewels.' His voice rang out in a plaint, then silence fell between us. When he spoke again, it was thus:

"'Your wife lost a diamond and sapphire bracelet, an emerald ornament for the hair, a watch crusted with brilliants, two stars and a crescent of diamonds, a dragon fly of opals, a pendant of turquoise and a pearl necklace of seven strings. My partner, Slim Sanxy, and I took them. It was a big haul and we managed it with professional finish. Some second-rate bunglers would have taken the traps out of the city, but we knew they were safer in Paris. Some novices would have picked out the stones, but we realised that the pieces were more valuable intact, and that time would make it possible to pawn or ship them. In all this we showed the skill, born of good training.

"'We divided the spoil; I got the whole kit except the necklace, which more than balanced the rest. Slim has a weakness for pearls, and he cheated me in that deal. While you had the best detective talent of half-a-dozen cities at work, your jewels were lying in a little trunk in a back attic in the Rue Garrol. The pearl necklace is still there. I have quarrelled with Slim and we have dissolved partnership. We were a celebrated firm, Sanxy and Meridan. Some of the small pieces of jewellery are here in town, the others are in a Safe Deposit in Manchester, so I can't restore them to-day. I will fetch you the watch and bracelet in half-an-hour, and everything else shall be given back before I am a week older. I ask nothing from you, I only beg you to help me to be an honest man in future.'

"He was out of breath from his rapid recitation and another fit of coughing came upon him. Bewildered as I was I found voice to say:

"'I will help you. Bring me back the bracelet if you can, my wife values it more than all the rest of her ornaments. I gave it to her when we were engaged.'

"'I knew,' he sighed. 'I saw the inscription inside of it, "Louise from Charles." I once had a sweetheart of my own, and, had she lived, I would have been a better man.'

"'The necklace, can I recover that also?'

"'Yes, telegraph to Scotland Yard for a man to go to 87, Lockspur Street, and ask for Casper Meridan—that's my name—Meridan will not be in, then ask for Slim Sanxy. If he is out, let the officer go to the back attic—the house is only three storeys—and in the back room, under the bed, he will find a little trunk with one hinge off and a broken lock; round it is tied a thin rope, knotted in six places. In the bottom of the trunk is a newspaper package which contains the case of pearls.'

"'You say you can get the bracelet and watch to-day?'

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"'Yes, here are the pawn tickets.' He drew them from his pocket.

"'Have you the money to redeem them?'

"'Not at present.'

"'How much do you need?'

"'Ten pounds. I can get that amount from my friend Wilkes late this afternoon.'

"'But I want my wife to have her bracelet as soon as possible. I will give you the money.'

"'I cannot accept your offer. Remember, Mr. Dysart, I am a thief by my own confession.' I handed him the money.

"'I will be back in half-an-hour.'

"As he unlocked the door he turned, and, noting some half defined expression on my face, burst into tears, then he laid the money upon the billiard table.

"'I see you don't trust me,' he cried his voice husky from humiliation. 'Take back the money, I will leave you the tickets, and you can send one of your servants for the things.'

"The man groaned aloud: 'Charles Dysart, you do not trust me,' the words vibrated through the room like an accusation and I felt like a criminal before his judge.

"'Good-bye,' he added, hurrying into the hall.

"I followed him in haste and drew him back into the room. In my heart rang the sweet old text, and, as I laid my hand upon Meridan's wrist, I whispered:

"'"There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth." I have confidence in you, and I insist upon your taking the money. I will try to help you to a better future. Bring my wife's things here in half-an-hour, I will wait for you. I shall also telegraph to Scotland Yard. I believe everything that you have told me.'

"A look of great joy overspread his face and for a moment the whole man seemed transfigured. Reverently he took my hand and touched it with his lips. Then he murmured: '"There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth."'

"The music of the words will linger in my memory for ever.

"When he was gone I told all to Louise and we fell to making plans for his redemption.

"The clock struck—our half-hour was over.

"An hour went by and still we waited. The shadows deepened and waned.

"At eight o'clock Meridan had not returned. Torn by conflicting emotions, I passed the night between doubt and belief, between hope and fear; at heart despising myself for my lack of faith.

"In the morning I decided to call at Scotland Yard. The Inspector received me in his private office, blandly smiling and politely interested. I related to him in detail every incident of the previous day.

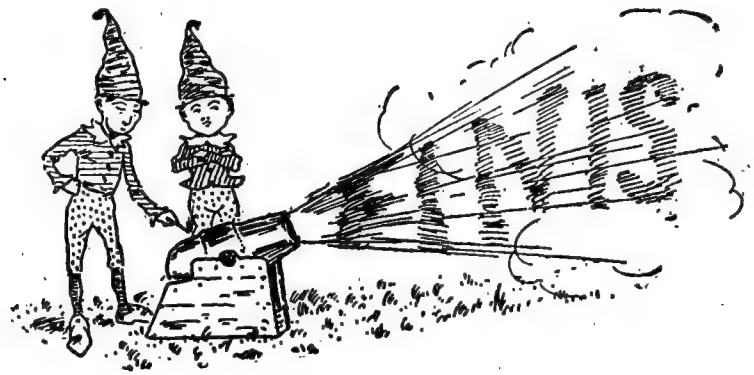
"When I had finished, not a muscle of his face betrayed his thoughts. He rose and walked to a cabinet, from the second drawer of which he took a photograph. Handing it to me, he said pleasantly:

"'That is your man.'

"'Yes.'

"'Robert Bolton, aged forty-one, a native of Lancashire. One of the most audacious rogues in Great Britain. Commonly known as Silvertongue.'"

H. P. Rogerson.



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Frederico's Revenge.

Under the cherry trees, hung with their red and scarlet spheres, the stranger cantered his tired steed wearily. He inhaled the sweet fragrance of the berries with the subtle aroma of long-dry meadows moistened by recent rain. A dreamy breeze stirred the leafage and shook down sundry of the ripest fruit to the soft grass at his horse's feet. The inharmonious notes of the locusts and katydids mingled in chorus in his ears.

At the laburnum tree near the gate the stranger tethered his horse, and lifting the latch, passed in under the white sprays of the Cherokee roses with a sigh. His smooth black hair and piercing eyes—fine still, in spite of his forty years—his flowing moustache and rather ostentatious attire proclaimed him a Spaniard, and being a Spaniard, it irked him to exert himself so near the hour of siesta. But there was that in his mind that overcame his lassitude, though the house he approached through the avenue of laurels was in fair Virginia, and it was the month of June.

In the open space before the door, where a low chair was tilted tenantless against a tree, he hesitated a moment and felt for something in the breast pocket of his bright-buttoned coat. There was a sharp "click," that scared away one or two of the fowls feeding there, and reassured, he went up the two stone steps.

The door stood ajar, but was hastily drawn open as his foot scraped the top flag, and a girl in cool white and blue stood in his way.

"What do yuh want hyar?" she asked somewhat aggressively.

The weary *caballero* stood still a full minute before he framed words in answer. Never before had he seen such lustrous eyes, such a delicate olive face, so handsome a head of hair. Never? Yes once—years ago—he had seen a face like that, the very reflex of that, though scarcely quite so fair—seen it and loved it. The fire of a sudden animation awoke in him.

"Is Señor Harding at home? I have a wish to see him," he finally said.

"He iz mendin' hiz hay-ricks tuh-day, sir," replied the girl, eyeing the handsome stranger curiously, while she deftly twined a red sash round her waist. "but ef yuh pertticklerly want tuh see him, yuh kin wait. Yuh kin sit thya', while I tidy." And she pointed to an old rocker opposite the window.

Without another word she bustled about her "tidyin'" duties, flitting about the large room with a certain easy grace and anon stealing sidelong glances at the stranger. His eyes followed her everywhere, and when her shapely little head came in the path of the pattern of light that crept in between the fluttering clematis of the window, she looked so radiantly lovely that the visitor half repented of his errand.

The old-fashioned clock announced noisily that half-an-hour had gone, and the girl busied herself laying a white cloth on the table and bringing out the dinner, and he saw, with a vague wonder, that she set out three plates, and placed a knife and fork and spoon by each.

"Dad'll not be long now," she vouchsafed him abruptly. "I'll call him."

She went to the doorway and trilled out: "Coo-ee! Coo-ee!" in a sweet if penetrating voice. "I reckon that'll bring him hyar, moughty quick!" she said.

The stranger, regarding her southern, almost Spanish beauty, with very open admiration, said slowly:

"*Creo mio!*—believe me—no man could decline a summons from one so fair!"

"Yuh're tol'able complimentry, stranger," she laughed, not ill-pleased, "but I ain't s'posin' yuh think compliments ez new to me?"

Federico Vadés comprehended her full Virginian idiom perfectly. It reminded him—as did her face, her eyes, her rich brown throat—of a time long past, a bitter-sweet amour upon the plaza of a house in far Seville.

"Of course not, Señorita," he said, in his best English, "your beauty commands it from men, as it must provoke envy in women. But is that not the *padre*—Señor Harding?"

"Hyar he iz—en dead tired, too; ain't yuh, dad?"

"That's so, honey," broke in a strong masculine voice. "Fyah tired out, en ready for a glimpse of your pret'y face, en a taste of dinner."

The iron-grey man—old in work and worry, if not in years—picturesque in his soft felt hat, rough suit, and cowhide boots, had got thus far in his observations when he caught sight of the stranger—who had risen and stood with hand in his pocket—on the opposite side of the table. He started violently, as though the car of memory had jogged suddenly over a deep rut in life's road, and looked keenly at the unbidden guest. His hand sought his hip

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pocket, and on his face was something like the queer expression on the other man's.

He was silent awhile, and the Spaniard never spoke while the girl glanced from one to another in surprise. At last his lips moved, and he said deliberately:

"So yuh've found me out, hev yuh? Well, yuh know Eph Hardin'—you *did* know him"—with a grim relaxing of the features—"en you don'expect Ephraim Hardin' tuh go back on eny trouble ov his own creatin'?"

The tone, though low, was one of concentrated earnestness, and the last syllables conveyed a defiance, a menace.

A red flush mounted to the Spaniard's brow, and his arm moved as though he would withdraw his hand. He caught the girl's swift glance upon him, and paused, irresolute, unnerved.

"Why don' yuh speak?" asked Harding. "Yuh may ez well get through with what yuh hev tuh say, en let me sit down."

"You know well what I might say," replied the stranger significantly. "I have not come all the way from España (Spain) for a little purpose. I was accounted a good marksman in the army twenty-five years ago."

"So yuh wuz," said old Eph, recovering his usual complacency and helping himself to bacon and greens as he sat down. "So yuh wuz, ef I 'member right. As fur that, Eph Hardin' wuz never reckoned a slouch when shootin' wuz concerned. Eph Hardin' hez been reckoned considrabul smart as a shooter—cert'n'y."

The quiet assumption of superiority implied in this speech nettled the other, and with a Spanish oath he drew something bright and shining from his coat and laid it on the cloth before him.

"If you have one to match that," he said, "we will finish our disagreement now and have done with it. I would have shot you like a dog as you came in, but for your daughter here—she is so much like her mother. For her sake we will fight our quarrel fairly."

Quick as lightning Ephraim whipped his revolver out and laid it opposite the other.

"Thank yuh fur nothin!" he said. "Ef yuh hadn't been so pow'ful dil't'ry, I shud hev plugged yuh orf ez soon ez I seen yuh—what's that fur, Evely?"

For the girl, pallid-faced and wide-eyed, had sprung forward and placed one hand on each implement of death.

"Yuh've no right to fight hyar, before me," she cried. "Leastways, 'thout tellin' me the why and wherefore ov it."

"Yease, honey, yuh're right. Yuh shud know. En ef yuh kin wait, señor, I'll tell her now. Its cert'n'y pertickler she shud know."

The other nodded; his eyes once more wandered to Eveline's southern features and furry hair. She rose from the table and went and stood with her hands behind her in the dappled sun and shadow of the window.

Harding slowly laid down his knife and fork and twisted round his chair. Then he cleared his throat once or twice.

"Yuh remember yo' mother, Evely? Yuh remember how sweet she wuz—jes' like yo'self, darter?"

Eveline acquiesced quickly.

"En yuh kyarnt rec'lect me being bad in no way, Evely? Yuh don' know enybody ez kin p'int tuh enythin' ez old Eph Hardin's done ez he oughter be 'shamed ov, do yuh? Yuh kyarnt say ez I've ever been mean, kin yuh?" asked Ephraim confidently.

"No dad," said the girl, wondering what connection there was between the two queries. "Yuh've aluz been straight, yuh've never been a crook."

"No, yuh never heard of Eph Hardin' bein' mean, Evely—neyther yuh nor enybody else hyar hez heard that. But I *wuz* mean once, en it wuz fur yo' mother's sake, honey. Don't shift from where yuh are, Evely—yuh look jes' like her, so,—en I'll tell yuh how it wuz.

"It's a long time back now, when I wuz a foolish young cub, en had been sent out tuh Yewrope tuh see the sights. It *wuz* gettin' time fur to come home, en I had fetched up in sleepy Seville — Sayveelyay, they call it thyar—whah yo' mother wuz bawn. She was of'en at a house whah I visited, en this hyar young fellar—he wuz young, then, yuh mind—wuz engaged to mah'y her when she came ov age.

"I don' know how it wuz, but I envid *him* at ferst, en then I came tuh lovin' *her*, en the thing wuz done. She loved me, as yuh know, honey, but dar'n't go agenst her folks while Federico held her tuh her bond, en nacherally I wuzn't goin' tuh allow ez a Yankee shud give in tuh a lazy Spaniard ez wuz fit for nothin' only tuh sit under orange trees and smoke cig'rettes from sun-up till owl-time. It riled me, darter, tuh think ov, en besides, tho' I wuz young, I loved yo' mother 'nough fur twice my age."

Ephraim paused a moment, reflectively. He was outwardly as unmoved now as though he was alone with the white-clay pipe he twirled in his fingers with the deftness born of long habit.

"I've never tol' this tuh enybody befo', en I don' like it now," he pursued slowly, "but I s'pose it hez tuh be done. Well, tuh make it short, I pertended for a while tuh be indifferent tuh yo' mother an' great pards with Federico hyar, so's I could find out somethin' about him ez wud give me a lead in gettin' him outer my way. En I hadn't long tuh wait fur that somethin'. I found ez he wuz a big polertishun—a Republican—en wuz plottin' agenst the crown, en so—but shuh, darter, yuh kin see now what I did, sure-ly?"

"Yuh split on him tuh the Guv'n'ment, so's he got impris'n'd, en then, hidin' yo' part in it, yuh came express tuh hyar with yo' wife—with mother."

"Hit's right good guessin', is yo's, Evely! Hit's jes'

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what I did, en since then till now I've never seen nor heard of Federico hyar."

"En now he's cum—en about time he did come!" said Evely, carried away by her strong sense of justice. Her father was silent.

"Now you know why I am here, señorita," said Vadés, impatiently. "It is time we ceased talking, and came to deeds. I have suffered long and bitterly, and travelled far to find your father out, and my horse is waiting at the gate. I have sworn to have vengeance on the man who has ruined my life, and we Spaniards never forego a revenge."

His hands clutched the revolver. His fingers rested on the trigger. Old Ephraim made a swift move as though to raise his weapon, too, as he left his chair, then suddenly let his hand fall, and stood there motionless, not speaking. Federico Vadés levelled his weapon full at his adversary's heart; the muscles of his face contracted grimly.

"Yuh sharn' kill him, stranger!" cried the girl. her love reviving in an impulse. "Yuh sharn' kill him 'thout killin' me ez well. He's my father, en my mother loved him—en tol' me to take kyar ov him fur her sake. Yuh kyarnt tuch him now!"

Her strong arms were round the old man's waist; her pulsing form betwixt him and the threatening death.

"Don't make me look a fule, gyrl," said Ephraim angrily, struggling with her. "I'm one to stand up fur my own misdoin's. Lemme go, honey"—in a softer tone—"Yuh kin ask Federico hyar whether he'll be likely to st›p shootin' fur yuh."

A day ago the Spaniard would have ridiculed the suggestion that he would have felt any qualms in such a position. Now he hesitated, muttered indistinctly, dropped his right hand, and stepped back a pace.

"I can wait," he said sullenly, folding his arms.

Eveline disengaged herself from her shame-faced parent and regarded the stranger curiously.

"What 'ud yuh say ef I cud tell yuh how to have yo' revenge 'thout killin' dad—en me?" she asked. "Ef yuh cud take somethin' from him ez he kyars fur more than his life?"

The man returned her gaze steadily, thought a moment, and decided:

"If I could do that, señorita," he said, "it would be a keener pleasure, if there is anything that——"

There came a queer gleam—an admixture of self-abnegation and mirth—into the girl's clear, round eyes, and her red lips framed the words:

"Yuh'll mah'y *me*, en take me away. Yuh're in love with me now, else yuh'd have fired."

Her face was radiant, she was altogether lovely—the very image of her mother. Federico stepped forward, letting his revolver fall from his nerveless fingers. He drew closer and took her hand, and as she bent towards him, kissed her on the lips.

"As you say, Evely. You are dearer to me than his own life. Come, my horse is waiting."

The girl took his hand without a tremour, and followed him into the sun-glare of the doorway. The iron-grey man left by the table neither moved nor spoke until their shadows fell across the white-flagged floor to his feet. It was all so sudden, so entirely unforeseen.

"Say, Federico," he said, turning quickly, "hit's scarcely so pertic'ler that yuh take Evely 'thout her dinner. Kyarnt yuh wait a few minnits—bein' ez we're quits?"

His voice was steady yet, but there was a suspicious glisten on the lower lids of his eyes.

He spoke to Vadés, but he was looking past him at his daughter. Señor Vadés looked into her face likewise, read consent there, and turned back into the room.

"Yes, Ephraim," he said. "I can wait now I find revenge so very sweet!"

Harding grew even graver than his wont, and the hard lines on his forehead puckered into painful distinctness.

"This iz all very well," he said "but I want to ask yuh each a questyen. En answer me straight, both ov yuh, er things stands ez they did befo'. Do yuh *love* her, Federico, same's yuh loved her mother, same's *I* loved her?"

"*Si*, señor. She is her mother young again."

"En yuh, Evely, does yuh love *him*, same's yo' mother loved me?"

"Yes, dad."

"Yuh ain't playin' with me, darter? It's a fac'?"

"Yes, dad. I'm ready tuh mah'y him when the hay's got in."

Ephraim was satisfied. Even a katydid cleaning its long thin legs on the window-sill, escaped his usually ruthless fingers.

"Yuh cert'n'y air sweet, sugar," he said, seizing her hand and drawing her towards him. "Yuh air. But yuh ain't goin' from hyar tuh-day, nor tuh-morrer, ef I guess right. Yo' dad'll be thya' when yuh air wed, er there'll be some moughty pow'ful ructions in this part ov old Virginy!—En yuh ain't goin' jes' yet, son-in-law prespective!" he added.

Nor did Federico. Sounds of quiet talk and sundry peals of laughter came from the house at intervals the rest of the day, and later, the glow of lamplight through the warm red curtains. The sun went down without the silence of the avenue of laurels being broken by the noise of horse-hoofs on the soft grass, and it was quite dark when the pointers of the Great Bear, shining through a rift in the breaking night-clouds, saw the *Caballero* come out to feed and stable his weary steed, and then go in again, bolting the door behind him.

George C. Wallis.

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on Jubilee Day; of that there can be little doubt. The crush in the streets will be tremendous, and as there is little possibility of your being able to obtain a vehicle from the station to the seat which you may have engaged, you will have to force your way through the seething mass.

The most sensible thing under the circumstances, therefore, will be for you to carry in your pocket a copy of *Pearson's Weekly*, dated June 26th, with the special insurance coupon signed. Then, in the unhappy event of your meeting with a fatal accident, your next of kin will receive £100, which is the amount guaranteed by the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation, Limited.

This valuable number of the paper will be published on Friday, June 18th, and will contain full particulars of the conditions under which the claims will be met.

It goes without saying that you, yourself, will not disregard this advice. Do your friends who are going to the Jubilee procession in London a good turn by telling them about this.

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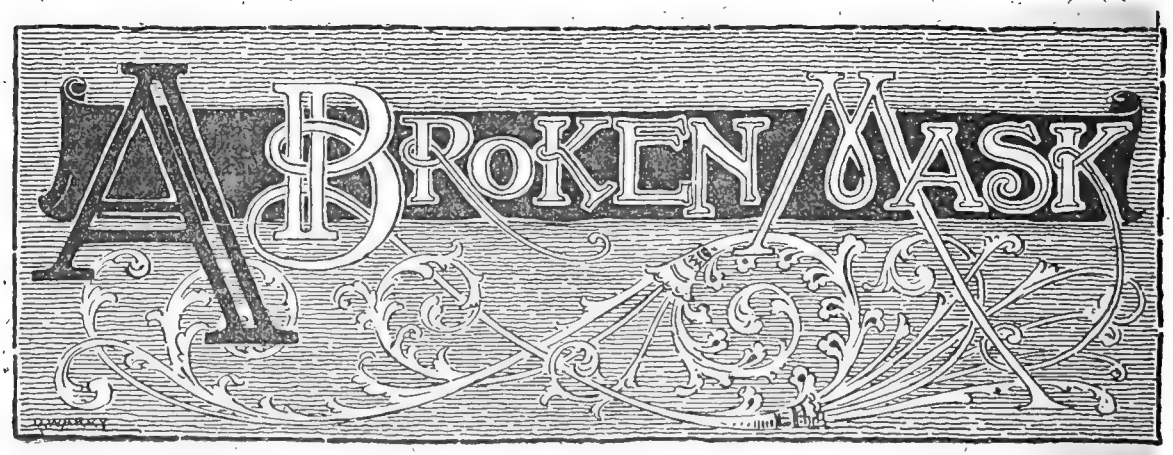

BY JOAN BARRETT.

CHAPTER XI.

A VERIFIED SUSPICION.

FROM the kitchen came a cheerful clatter of tea-things as Betty arranged them upon the tray. Aunt Shales pricked up her ears at the sound, sucking in her full lips as she watched Diana's pale face.

"As you knows," said she, "them di'monds was stole from that po'r Mrs. Lealter two nights ago, an' a sore way she was in, as you may have read in the paper. An' them there bank-notes belongs to Mrs. Caffyn, an' must have been stole when she was at The Towers, for I read the numbers in the paper an' cut 'em out jest for cur'osity like, an' they tallies ev'ry one, for I counted 'em the minit as I see them di'monds."

"Where is—Mr. Gillway?" Di asked. Oh, it was possible that he might be able to explain his possession of these inculpating things, she thought with a passionate fervour that would have surprised her had she been capable of analysing her emotions just then.

"Ah, that I couldn't tell; no, not if you was to drag me up hill an' down dale with wild horses, an' pay me in untold gold. All I knows is as he didn't come home las' night, an' me a-waitin' up till nigh on ten by the kitching clock for him, an' I ain't set eyes on him to-day, not as there's anythink surprisin' in that, seein' as he thinks nothin' of stoppin' out nearly ev'ry night in the week, as you may say, an' lets hisself in with one of them there lash keys, as I never did abide, an' never shan't, for if you drops off to sleep how can you tell when anybody as has one o' they things comes home, an' some folks 'ud take advantidge o' that an' swear as they come in early by the clock, an' not bein' what you'd call a light sleeper, havin' so many worrits in the day, I never did know when he come in, an' that's the Gospel truth, Miss Di, an' glad 'nough he must have felt that that Em'ly slep' so sound as well as me, an' I feels that thankful, too, for you may depend upon it he'd have thought nothin' o' murderin' that po'r gal an' me in our blessed beds if we'd a sin him comin' home with his pockets all stuffed out with gold and di'monds, an' his arms full of brick-brackt!" said Aunt Shales, delivering herself of the last word with an air of consequence, and inwardly proud of the memory which enabled her to add *bric-à-brac* to the various gleanings she had gathered from newspaper descriptions of robberies and weddings.

"Aunt Shales," said Di. "Have you shown these things to anyone but me, or spoken about them to anybody?"

Aunt Shales blinked at the ceiling, at the glowing fire, and the snowdrops upon the table. Her little twinkling eyes looked at everything but at Di.

"Lawks!" she answered. "As if I should. 'Tain't likely as I'd let on to folks about what I looks on as a personal disgrace."

"I am so glad you think like that. I wouldn't say anything. Mr. Gillway may be able to explain their presence in his desk, and if he can, it would be very unpleasant for you if he heard that you had shown them to people, and had talked about them, and that in consequence people regarded him as a—a thief," said Di, the ugly word sticking in her throat.

Aunt Shales looked serious, and wrinkled her grey eyebrows.

"You see," continued Di. "We have no proof that Mr. Gillway has stolen these things. He may have a proof that he has not."

"He'd have to give the p'lice a good big proof," said Aunt Shales with reviving energy. "Seein' as I found 'em in his very own desk; oh, I did, an' if I was put to tortures like any of them po'r marters I couldn't say no diff'rent, not if I tried till I was black in the face, never having had no practice in lyin'."

As Aunt Shales spoke of the police, a cold thrill ran down Di's back. What if they were already upon John Gillway's track? she thought, suddenly remembering the smooth-voiced little man who had questioned her about the tenant of Honeypots Farm.

"When I called at the farm this morning I went to see you. I found a gentleman in the yard. He spoke of being an old friend of Mr. Gillway's, and he wanted apartments"—Di began. Aunt Shales interrupted her in excitement:

"There! If our Poll didn't up an' tell me as she'd seen him a-hangin' about agin. Not as I dares speak after Poll, for if ever there was a twin sister to Sapphiry, it's our Poll! Wanted 'partments, did he? That's jest what he tried to make out as he wanted afore. Shortish and thinnish, an' with eyes like gimlets?" and as Di nodded, Aunt Shales added: "Oh, it's him, right 'nough. How I do wish as I'd seen him. I'd a 'partmented him! He didn't show you the photograph of Mr. Gillway, did he, Miss Di?" and upon Di answering in the negative, Aunt Shales proceeded to give a glowing account of the stranger's visit to the farm, relating with keen enjoyment how her master had taken down a horsewhip to the man, and had given him to understand that he was trying to "give up bein' a thief," and would brook with no interference; "which sounds as though at one time he didn't keep his fingers none too straight, as our Poll said to me then and there."

"You are quite sure that he said he was trying to give up being a thief?"

"As sure as eggs is eggs, an' I dunno who could be surer

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than *that*. What they said to each other out of my hearin', I can't answer for, an' wouldn't; but 'pend upon it, that there 'partment man knows some'ut dark about Mr. Gillway. Why!" exclaimed Aunt Shales, struck all at once with a brilliant idea, and opening her little eyes to their fullest extent. "He might have bin a detective in disguise!"

She was so overcome with the awfulness of this thought that her mouth remained open as she stared fixedly at Di.

"All clean-shaved, too!" she added jerkily. "The very picture of one in the P'LICE NEWS! An' to think as that Poll was right!"

"You don't know that she *is* right. The gentleman spoke of being a friend of Mr. Gillway's family."

"An' a friend as they'd be on'y too glad to do without!" declared Aunt Shales in evident pity for Di's seeming simplicity. "Friend, indeed! As much a friend as the hangman is to them as he puts the halter round their po'r necks, you may be sure of that. Oh, I see'd what *he* was, Miss Di, the d'rectly minute as I clapped eyes on him. *He* couldn't take me in an' do for *me*, an' Mr. Gillway, too! Many's the time as I've said to friends when they're dropped in for a cup of tea, as there was some'ut hid up about him. I never do trust people as locks up everythink. As I says, it don't look square an' open like, do it, now? An' him that gloomy! There, livin' right in front of a fillin' up fast cemet'ry, couldn't have bin no gloomier; an' knowed no more about farmin' than my best bonnet!" she said conclusively, as though this ignorance on the part of John Gillway was a proof of his wickedness.

Di opened the letter with trembling fingers.

As Di looked in deep distress at the bank-notes upon the table, Aunt Shales gave a quick jerk of her head over her shoulder, started, and cried:

"Lawk's! If I didn't think as I'd heard somethink, an' my heart right up in my mouth as you may say, with the fright of it, sir."

The cause of her fright was the Nabob; a very pale, dejected-looking Nabob, whose attempt at smiling was a sorry failure, though his pleasant voice had a cheerful ring as he said:

"I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Shales, for alarming you. I only wonder that you didn't find me out before. I came into the room some time ago; I've heard nearly everything. Let me look at the things, may I?"

"'Course you may, sir. You can look at 'em till you're blind with starin,'" replied Aunt Shales very affably, and dropping a flurried curtesy, but eyeing the young man rather severely. She might be guilty of listening at keyholes herself, but that did not lessen her contempt for others who did the same.

"Oh, Bernard," cried Di, "I am so glad you have come. What are we to do? Ought Aunt Shales to replace these things in Mr. Gillway's desk?"

"For them p'lice to find 'em, an' me to lose my character, Miss Di! Not me! I brought 'em here, thinkin' as you'd take care of 'em. I couldn't get a wink of sleep if I know'd that they was in the house!" exclaimed Aunt Shales.

"But when Mr. Gillway returns he will miss them."

"Seein' as they don't belong to him he's got no right to cry over their loss," retorted Aunt Shales. "Have he now, sir?"

"No. I think," said the Nabob, after he had examined the pendant and the bank-notes, "that your best plan is to keep perfectly silent upon this matter, Mrs. Shales. If you talk of your discovery, you will certainly get into trouble. A man like your master will spare no means to clear himself. If he can throw his guilt upon you, he will. You wouldn't like to find yourself in a police cell?"

"Me in a p'lice cell! Goodness gracious, sir, you can't mean it?"

"I should be very sorry to see you there, but a great many innocent people do get placed there. If John Gillway finds that you have betrayed him, his first wish will be to injure you, out of revenge, you know. He will accuse you of being his accomplice, and how are you to prove that you are not?"

"But, Bernard, the fact of her bringing these things to me would clear her of any complicity in the robberies," said Di, as Aunt Shales gasped and remained speechless.

"He will say that she knew the police were after them, and that she pretended innocence, and acted the part of betrayer in order to clear herself. Didn't you say that you had seen a man who appeared to be a detective, at the farm? John Gillway may declare that the fact of that man being there induced Mrs. Shales to hurry here to Miss Strange with these proofs of his guilt."

"An' me more innocent than a' unborn lamb!" ejaculated Aunt Shales, quivering with indignation.

"That will have to be proved; anyhow, I'll stake all I have upon one thing: talk of your discovery and you'll get into prison, Mrs. Shales. You may come out cleared from the charge, but the stigma of having been implicated in the robberies will cling to you as long as you live. Your friends alone will believe in your innocence!"

Aunt Shales sank into a chair and clasped her hands together in dismay. The picture of her future, as the Nabob drew it, filled her with alarm. Mentally she began to review her friends, and picked out from the number those who would certainly rejoice in her downfall from the very high pedestal of respectability upon which she had stood herself. To appear in a "police case" as a criminal! She, Ann Shales! And no doubt, her portrait would be given in the weekly supplement of the papers! Her little fat hands grew quite moist with perspiration.

"The best thing to do," continued the Nabob, watching Aunt Shales with bright, watchful eyes, "is for all of us to act as if we had never heard nor seen these things. I'll return them to their owners anonymously. That can do no harm, and will deliver you and Miss Strange from a dilemma. Mrs. Caffyn and Mrs. Lealter will believe that the robbers have returned the bank-notes because they were valueless to the thieves, and the pendant through some chivalrous feeling for its pretty owner. If Mr. Gillway returns, he will ask you no questions about the disappearance of these things from his desk. He will be too clever for that, and you can leave his employ, Mrs. Shales."

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"An' on'y too thankful, sir!" said Aunt Shales, wiping her damp forehead with a very large cotton handkerchief. "To think as I——"

The entrance of Betty with the tea-tray caused her to pause, and to rise in a flutter. She refused to stay to tea, and departed in great haste, evidently with the intention of swearing those people to secrecy to whom she had shown the pendant and the bank-notes. Di heard her whispering to Betty in the kitchen.

"Why did you frighten her so, Bernard?" she asked.

The Nabob drew a letter from his pocket.

"Because I don't want the police to track that scoundrel down! Oh, not for his sake, don't think that, Di; it's for—Kitty's sake! I—I—read this—I found it in her desk."

Di opened the letter with trembling fingers. It contained few words:

I have gone away with the man I love. You never made me happy. KITTY.

CHAPTER XII.

DISHONOUR.

"I NEVER thought that Kitty would do *that*!" said the Nabob bitterly. "She didn't give me a long trial, did she, Di?"

He took the paper from her trembling fingers, folded it up, and made a movement to replace it in his breast pocket; but his face darkened as though some new idea had entered his brain with the touch of his fingers upon Kitty's letter. With a gesture that was full of disgust he crumpled it savagely in his hand, and tossed it into the glowing fire.

"There's the end of it for me," said he, when the letter had flared up and was reduced to black tinder. "But what will be the ending for Kitty? Shame and disgrace, and perhaps that scamp will leave her, the villain! Women like Kitty so soon lose their good looks. That man can never make her happy. She says I couldn't, did you read it, Di?—and how can he if I failed? I should have made her happy if he had given me a chance. Oh! Di, I daren't think about it, my brain feels on fire!"

He sank heavily into a seat, bowing his head, and hiding his face in his hands. Di saw his shoulders heave. She went to his side and very gently touched his hands with her cool, soft fingers.

"We must find her," she said. "Kitty must be brought back."

The Nabob sprang to his feet and laughed. It was the laugh of a man who felt himself to be impotent.

"Bring her back," he repeated. "You forget that she went away early last night. It was not nine when her maid bade her good-night. They went to London yesterday, be sure of that, and by this time they're on their way to America as man and wife. The scoundrel only waited to secure a good big haul before taking Kitty away." He walked to the window and returned to his seat. "Kitty will have her jewels again," said he in the same harsh, bitter tone. "The jewels that I gave her, and he stole! Do you remember Christmas Eve, Di, and his face at the conservatory window? I thought that he was after Kitty; I never dreamt he was after anything else. I wonder what he has done with your bracelet? Perhaps he'll give it to Kitty and she'll wear it."

Di's overcharged heart gave way. So much had happened in that long eventful day, that it seemed now as though she could bear no more. Her head drooped, and as the Nabob rose restlessly again from his seat, and turned to pace the room once more, perhaps with some bitter invective against Kitty or John Gillway upon his tongue, he saw the big tears slowly coursing down Di's pale cheeks.

"Don't cry," he said. "Don't. They're not worth it, Di."

She answered with a sob, so full of distress that the muscles of his set face twitched. As she put up one hand to her face, groping with the other for her pocket-handkerchief, the Nabob went quickly to her and took the hand that sought her pocket.

"I'll say no more about them, dear Di," he murmured in boyish contrition. "I'll only hope that *he* may make her happy."

"You must find them," she said through her tears.

"I'll try, but—I can't go about asking blunt questions at the station. I'll go to London and ask at the shipping offices. But if I *do* find them and Kitty refuses to come back to me, what am I to do? Sue for a divorce, and break the old dad's heart, Di?"

"No, no," she faltered, shaking her head.

"Let her go, and hope that some day she will return to me of her own free will."

"Would—would—you take her back?"

The Nabob dropped her hand, and resumed his uneasy walk from one end of the room to the other.

"No, by Jove, that I couldn't!" Di heard him mutter. "It would be an act of madness! People would laugh at me for a fool." The ornaments rattled upon the chiffonnier as he strode past it. "Put an advertisement in the leading dailies: 'To K. E.—Come back. All will be forgiven,' and feel in my heart that I could never kiss her lips or touch her hand, or look into her eyes without remembering. Would that be forgiveness? Or to start afresh, if she returned, to live separate lives beneath the same roof—that would feel to each of us that we were chained to a dead body. How could I take her back? Oh! my poor little Kitty! To think that I can speak like this of her. After all, she is that man's victim. He terrified her. Don't you remember how frightened she always was of him, Di? He has had a deadly revenge; it is upon her that it falls!"

Outside in the big yard they caught the sound of Farmer Strange's cheery voice as he gave directions to one of the farm hands. He had just returned from market. As Di heard the echo of his heavy boots in the kitchen, she rose to her feet, found her handkerchief, and hurriedly wiped her eyes.

"Dad mustn't know," she whispered, trembling from head to foot. "Help me to hide it from him. I am pale—I know I am. Is that better?"

She rubbed her cheeks violently with her hands, pinching them until two hectic spots burnt hotly beneath her eyes.

The Nabob nodded, picked up the roll of bank-notes and the jewel case, and thrust them into his coat pocket as Farmer Strange entered.

"I'm glad to see you, my boy," said he, stretching out a great cold hand to his son-in-law. "How's Kitty?"

"Jolly. She's gone away for a little while—on a visit to a friend's—she hadn't time to wish you good-bye, so I've come in her place."

"Ah, gone on a visit, is she?" said Farmer Strange, placing his broad back before the fire. "And why ain't you with her?"

There was nothing unusual in his tone; but the Nabob paled, and an uneasy expression flitted across his face.

"I am going to-morrow. Couldn't get off to-day. Wanted to send away all my valuables to the bank before going. Have you heard of the robbery at Mrs. Lealter's? Makes one feel a bit nervous. Kitty's grown no end timid since that affair at our own place, and now these other robberies have added to her fears. I'm afraid I shall have to give up The Towers. Luckily Lord Powers only let it to me for two years, so I shan't be much the loser."

"Where d'you think of going?"

"I hardly know. In fact, I haven't actually made up my mind about leaving The Towers, but I can see it will come to that."

"Kitty's looked poorly, of late," said Farmer Strange, rubbing his scrubby chin reflectively. "She wants the town air, does Kitty! Why don't you get a place at Leigh for her?"

"Too much of a town. I fancy she'd like a house near London, Richmond or Pangbourne," answered the Nabob.

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He smiled at Di, who had seated herself at the table. "Have you got a cup for me, Di? Lots of cream, please, and not much sugar."

As he took the cup from her shaking fingers, and while her father was building up the fire, he whispered under cover of the clatter of the fire-irons:

"If she comes back, I'll take her, Di."

When the day was ended—that dreadful day that stood out for ever in the memory of Diana Strange, distinct and separate from every other day of her life—and she could go

Huddled in a white dimity-covered chair.

to her room without fear of awaking suspicion in her father, Di sat by the fire and went over every detail that she could remember in the story of Kitty and John Gillway.

First, there had been the arrival of Gillway at Honeypots Farm, and the sensation that his white hands and gentlemanly appearance had caused. No one knew anything of his past; he had made no confidant, not even of Kitty, for Di had heard Kitty speak of the young farmer's reticence.

Poor Kitty! Did she know now what manner of man she had entrusted with her happiness? Then came the advent of the stranger, the man whom John Gillway had threatened with the whip. He must know the secret of Gillway's past.

And then Di thought of her first interview with Gillway after her return from Capri, and his bitter words about Kitty's faithlessness. He had told her that when he was struck, he returned the blow; harder if possible. That admission betrayed his revengeful disposition. Kitty's return followed, and her childish terror of the man she had deceived. Clearly Kitty had known that John Gillway did not easily forgive; her terror had not been unfounded.

But had not some better sentiment stirred in Gillway's heart when Di had asked him to see Kitty, and he had replied that he was afraid! She had shown him her contempt for this assertion. How wrong she had been. He had tried to draw back, and she had pushed him onward with her taunts. Perhaps he had gone to The Towers with the determination to be strong, and association with Kitty had stirred up his evil passions. He had questioned her about the people who would be at The Towers; of Kitty's jewels, and he had spoken of Lady Rivers' emeralds, wishing that some of them were in his possession. Why had he asked these questions unless it was with the idea of profiting by the information? She had seen him hiding about the grounds before the robbery had taken place.

There was the loss of the flour sacks from his granary, and his command to Aunt Shales to keep silence respecting that loss. The value of the sacks was slight; Di could think of no motive for his desire to keep the loss unknown except a fear that some connecting link might be formed to prove him the author of the robbery.

Then followed his gradual access of power over poor weak Kitty. Their stolen interviews culminating with her own last meeting with them, and Kitty's wish to confide some secret to her sister. Was that secret the arrangement that Gillway had made for taking Kitty away? It must have been, and Kitty, ever impulsive, volatile, and unthinking, would have told Di their plans for flight had not Gillway forbidden her to break silence.

"There is no need to make her unhappy yet; she must learn everything before long," he had said, speaking of Di; and again: "You will ruin us, Kitty, if you break silence until no harm can come of speech."

No other possible explanation of these words occurred to Di, and did not the subsequent event verify this theory? Kitty and John Gillway had gone away together; Di had read Kitty's admission to her husband, that she had thrown in her lot with the man she loved—*with the man who loved her*; with the man who was a thief! The pale moon, looking in at the window of Di's room, saw a crouching figure, huddled in a white dimity-covered chair staring into a dead fire, as long as it shed its light in that direction. There was only the moon to see, and only the stillness of night to hear the broken-hearted cry that fell once from Di's cold lips:

"Why are we punished so cruelly? Dear God, why?"

When the morning dawned she rose from her seat, stiff and aching with weariness and the uncomfortable position in which she had passed the long hours of the night, and bathed her face, and looked almost with a stranger's eyes at her pallid, haggard reflection in the glass. She had aged in the night. She would not have felt astonished had she discovered that her hair had turned grey.

Outdoors the birds were wishing each other good-morning in cheerful twitters, the ducks were already debating among themselves whether it was yet too early to walk to the pond, and the cocks had long warned all listening creatures that morning had come, and that it was time to throw off sloth and slumber and arise to the duties and pleasures and the cares that the day brings.

Then there came the rattling sound of pails, and the wheezy response of the yard-pump; the neighing of the horses as they recognised some familiar voice or step, and the plaintive "moo" of the cow, mingling with the "shur-shur" of the chaff-cutter.

Di went down the steep, narrow stairs, and opened the house door. It was still grey; but in the east a deep red flush, like a fog-veiled fire, told that the sun was rising.

"The sun will shine presently; it will be a fine day," she thought mechanically.

She closed the door, for the early air was cold, and with gentle courage and patient hope she began her morning duties. To herself she said once or twice, as she moved about the house:

"The sun will shine presently!" and there was comfort in the thought.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Mysterious Encounter.

The Nabob sent Di a letter from London two days later. His surmise that Kitty and John Gillway had left England immediately for America had been verified. he told her

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The fugitives had sailed early upon the morning that Kitty was missing from home. They had booked their passages in the names of Mr. and Mrs. John Dark; the booking-clerk who had answered the Nabob's inquiries concerning the passengers had given an unmistakably accurate description of Kitty and her companion. There could be no error in believing that Mr. and Mrs. John Dark were the people whom the Nabob sought.

"There is nothing to do," wrote the Nabob, "but to wait. I feel sure that Kitty will return to me. When she comes she shall find that, if she has lost her husband, I am still her friend."

The servants were dismissed at The Towers; the butler and housekeeper not being able to procure immediate

Di went to the piano.

situations, gladly fell in with their master's suggestion that they should remain as caretakers until a better chance of establishing themselves at the head of another household occurred.

The Nabob gave the same excuse to his friends in the neighbourhood for his abrupt departure that he had given to Farmer Strange. His wife had accepted a pressing invitation to spend a month in Rome with some friends, and he was joining her. There was no telling when they would return. In all probability they would travel in Italy after bidding good-bye to their friends at Rome.

About a fortnight after the departure of the Nabob, Di received a letter from Mrs. Caffyn, telling her that her lost bank-notes had been returned to her.

"I wish they had kept the bank-notes—for the bank would have made good my loss—and given me my dear diamonds and those lovely moonstones. But that is a little too much to expect, isn't it? Give my love to Kitty. Tell her I'm off to Spain with the Costellos, and will write to her when I am settled."

Di felt grateful for this last piece of news. She had dreaded Mrs. Caffyn's comments upon Kitty's silence, and her demand for Kitty's address. In Spain, where the postal regulations are so lax, and eleven out of every twelve men employed have the seemingly well-merited reputation of being thieves, Mrs. Caffyn might not feel deeply concerned at getting no letters from Kitty in response to her own.

About the same time that Di heard from Mrs. Caffyn, a paragraph in the local paper made known the startling fact that Mrs. Charles Lealter had had her diamond pendant returned to her anonymously through the post, and, while commenting upon the robber's gallantry, the writer stated that a warrant had been issued for the apprehension of a resident at Thorneydene, whose peculiar behaviour had long made an object of suspicion, and who there was every reason to believe was connected with the three large robberies that had taken place in the neighbourhood. The resident referred to was clearly John Gillway. Aunt Shales had long been sowing the seeds of mistrust in her master's honesty, and now those seeds had ripened into maturity.

But John Gillway did not return to be taken into custody, and when March came in with its cold winds and clear, keen sunshine, and its promise of green leaves and budding flowers, Aunt Shales cleared her few possessions out of the farm into a little cottage in the straggling village, and Emily departed to a neighbouring farmhouse. John Gillway's landlord locked up the farm; the men were dismissed, and a notice was inserted in the newspapers warning John Gillway that if he did not return by a stated time the farm implements would be sold by his landlord to defray the rent.

Oddly enough, Farmer Strange, who had never appeared to care greatly for the young man, raised the only dissenting voice in the bar parlour at the "Hare and Hounds" when local opinion declared in strong language that the missing tenant of "Honeypots" was a housebreaker. He would not agree to popular belief, and upon his return home from these gatherings he related the bar-parlour conversation to Di with his own observations upon it, watching her furtively from the corners of his grey eyes, to gather her impression as she listened.

He was not blind to her pallid cheeks and heavy-lidded eyes—the poor old father—nor so dense that he could not trace them to a certain cause. She might go bravely about her duties, never complaining, cheerfully accepting whatever the day might bring; but her voice was never raised in song, and she seldom laughed, and that was sad to observe, for Di had hitherto found so much at the farm to make merry over.

"Kitty ain't much of a correspondent," he remarked one day to Di when the postman had passed, bringing them no letters.

"She never cared for writing letters, daddy," answered Di, bending her head low.

"She likes it less than ever now, my gal! There must be a sight of things to see in Rome that she could write about."

"I've been to Rome, you know, with Aunt Caffyn. Kitty thinks there's no need to describe what I've seen, and—no news is always good news—dear."

Her father puffed at his clay pipe, looking at her beneath his over-hanging shaggy eyebrows.

"Like to go to Rome again, Di?" he asked after a pause.

"No, no," she answered hastily. "I am very happy here, daddy. I don't want to change; home is best."

"Home's all right for a place to come back to when you're tired of jogging about all over the world; but it's a good thing for young birds to stretch their wings, my dear, and if you'd like a change——" She rose from her seat, and threw herself at her father's knees, clasping her arms around them and looking up into his face.

"I *don't* want a change, daddy dear," she said with a quiver in her voice. "Is it because I'm so dull and quiet that you think I want to go away? I *am* dull, dad, not with weariness of this dear home and you, oh! no. I won't be dull any longer. I'll be so cheerful that you'll hardly recognise me," she declared with a piteous little laugh that had no mirth in it. "Shall I play you something? I haven't opened the piano since Kitty went—away."

Her father nodded, and Di went to the piano. She could

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It was Aunt Shales.

hardly see for the tears that blurred her vision; they fell upon the keys as she played a lively Irish jig, to which her father kept time with his foot.

Slowly, very slowly, the days passed into weeks, and then those weeks that had appeared so leaden-footed seemed to wake into life and skip into months, and spring made room for summer, and summer had to withdraw to give place to autumn, and, looking back, one sighed over the marvellous rapidity of Time.

One evening in October Di walked in the prim old garden with its broad flower borders where the sunflowers now drooped their heads, and the tall hollyhocks presented a drunken and woe-begone appearance. The bushes of blue starry Michaelmas daisies and pale yellow chrysanthemums sent out a strong perfume as she paced up and down the gravel path. The sky was very blue, with bright rosy streaks and dappled with fleecy white clouds. From the adjoining yard came the lowing of cows, and the whinnying of horses. An atmosphere of peace pervaded the garden, the beauty of the rose-flecked sky and the calm of the early evening seemed reflected in Di's face.

As she paced up and down she thought of Kitty, wondering where she was, and if she thought sometimes of her old home and its inmates. Only that morning her father had commented upon Kitty's silence with unusual bitterness.

"'Twas I that drove her from The Towers," he said. "Her pride couldn't bear to have me pointed out as Mrs. Eliot's father. She couldn't bear her smart friends to know that I was only a poor farmer. Bless you, my gal, I'm not blind. But there's no reason for her not writing to you. You're as much a lady as she is; but no doubt it's the butter-making that's set her against writing to you."

Di had faltered some feeble excuse for Kitty, but Farmer Strange refused to accept it. And Mrs. Caffyn, long back from Spain, had written again, peremptorily demanding Kitty's address and complaining of her odd silence.

Di was greatly perplexed to know what reason she was to give Mrs. Caffyn. She did not know where the Nabob was; a long time had elapsed since he had written to her.

The sharp click of the latch of the garden gate made Di raise her head. The shadows were falling, and at the first glance she could not recognise the person advancing towards her.

She knew who her visitor was the very next moment. It was Aunt Shales, not quite so rosy, and certainly more downcast of expression than Di had yet seen the worthy soul.

"Lawks, Miss Di!" she exclaimed, putting both hands to her breast. "What a startle you did give me with that there white gown of yours! I do declare as my heart stopped clean dead, I felt that frit." She looked round the garden and made a few flurried observations about the flowers and the weather in a manner that plainly betrayed the slight interest she took in them, and the anxiety to be thought polite that prompted the remarks. She carried a small basket upon one little plump arm. Di noticed that it was empty.

"I came to beg a few pot-herbs, Miss Di, if so be as you've any to spare," said Aunt Shales. "I allays did fancy my meals tasty-like, an' I was never one of them sort as chucks a bit of scraggy neck o' mutton into a pot full o' water an' leaves it to dish its own self up, with never a scrap o' onion or thyme to take away the taste of the pot. If I had bin one o' them sort I shouldn't ha bin alive now, seein' what a man Shales was for his stomach, and would have it dished reg'lar to the minute by the kitchen clock, or he'd know the reason why. Not as it's any use to cockle up one's appitite, Miss Di, seein' as we ain't here for long, an' many's the time I used to tell him so, but there, what I allays says is as men will be men, an' nothin' short of a miracle 'll ever make 'em anything else!"

Di had directed her steps towards a border of sweet herbs that grew beneath a south wall.

"Take as many as you like, Aunt Shales," said she kindly; "you must miss the farm garden very much."

Aunt Shales straightened her short back, looked steadily at Di for a moment, and then giving a queer gulping sound as though she was swallowing something disagreeable, she glanced behind and around her, and edging up to Di, she whispered:

"I've just come from Honeypots, an' if I'd on'y known what I was a-goin' to see there, the Lord Mayor and all his wile horses wouldn't have got my ten toes inside that kitching garding! Miss Di, as sure as eggs is eggs, an' never can't be nothin' else in this wicked, sinful world, I seed my master's sperit!"

Di raised her eyebrows, and looked so unimpressed by the statement that Aunt Shales hastened to add:

"I knows as some folks 'ull scream out at sight of haystacks an' cows an' other innocent animals, an' think if they on'y sees their own shadder as it's a ghost; but I never had nothin' to do with the likes of them. But I seed him, well, there, my own hand couldn't be plainer, an' he never said a word; he on'y jest looked at me so sad an' mournful like as if he'd jest got up from a deathbed, an' afore I could do so much as cry out, he was gone!"

"Where did you see him?"

"He was standin' by the little garding gate as opens from the farmyard. An' I was jest a-stoopin' down for a handful of thyme with never a blessed thought in my head but a wonder if the bit of scrag I was goin' to bile long with 'em was as fresh an' as sweet as it ought to be, for though I salted it the very day as I bought it, gettin' it cheap an' havin' my doubts about it, an' not bein' able to eat it through not having finished up my bit of roast pork, I didn't feel too sure about it. My heart was up in my mouth when I looked up an' saw him lookin' at me with eyes like yaller lamps jest a-goin' out! I didn't stay long after that. I was up an' out of that garding like a long dog, *an'* now," she added, with a gloomy shake of her head,

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"I knows what the sut meant by fallin' and puttin' out the fire, an' the meanin' of that great black dog as walked into the kitching las' night an' glared at me in a way as showed pretty plain where *he* come from. I'm sure my back felt jest as though I'd a iced worm a-sprawlin' all over it, an' as I said to our Poll, who was there at the time, *my* flesh never creeps for nothin'. But how I'm to lay him I don't know, an' till he *is* laid, there'll be no rest nor peace for me, Miss Di."

"*Laid!*" repeated Di, not understanding the allusion.

"That's what I've allays heard as sperits wanted when they come back; I never heard of one as wanted anything else, but, as I says, how I'm to lay him, bein' as innocent as the lamb unborn of what's happened to him, an' never doin' him a ha'porth of harm, seein' as I've never bin one to cackle 'bout what I seed and heard, beyond jest mentionin' it to a friend, or to you, Miss Di, an' allays feelin' as safe as a barn-door, as it 'ud go no further. It may be as

"An' I was jest a-stoopin' down for a handful of thyme."

it's the warrant bein' out for him," she said, wiping her eyes and sniffing, "an' he may hold me responsible for that, seein' as I've bin tole by many folks as it's all through me as it was done an' the rob'rys laid to his door. Not as I ever did feel proud of it, Miss Di! Oh, no, that I didn't, seein' more shame than glory in it, an' livin' in constant dread of bein' dragged into a witness box or a p'lice cell through it; but I never dreamt as I was goin' to be haunted through the dreams as I've had, 'nd make your hair stand on end on'y to hear tell on!"

"I don't believe in ghosts," said Di very quietly, but with firmness in her full, sweet tones. "You saw someone—a farm hand or a tramp very likely—and in your agitation you thought the man was your master. It is all a mistake, Aunt Shales, and if black dogs and falling soot were evil omens, I'm afraid everyone in the world would get a very big share of ill-fortune. The soot often falls in the kitchen."

Aunt Shales shook her head and sighed, evidently seeing evil in what Di intended for a comforting assurance.

"If I on'y knew what he wants!" said she. "Not as I wishes that *they* could speak, po'r souls! There, it never so much as entered my head when I've bin talkin' about him, as all the while he was dead and buried, no, that it didn't, or I'd never have said what I have, seein' how unlucky it is to speak ill of 'em!"

"Unkind, you mean. Oh, Aunt Shales, don't bother yourself about imaginary ghosts and omens! I thought you were too sensible to believe in such nonsense!"

Aunt Shales sighed and used her handkerchief again.

"Them ugly black dogs don't come into the houses for nothin', Miss Di, and if he ain't murdered an' his po'r body hid away, where is he?"

"That I cannot say! But it is foolish to think that Mr. Gillway is murdered. Why should you imagine that just because a stray dog happened to enter your kitchen?"

"But where can he be, Miss Di? The p'lice can't lay hands on him."

"It isn't likely that he would return to Thornydene, knowing that a warrant had been issued for him. No doubt he has gone abroad."

"I on'y wishes as I could think you was right, Miss Di, that I do. But if ever I seed anybody as plain as a pike-staff, it was Mr. Gillway this very night. I can see him now in my mind's eye. He'd a black coat on an' a little dark cap jest as he used to wear. An' his face was whiter than a lily—ah, Miss Di, when I puts two an' two together like that, they on'y makes four, no matter how I twistes 'em about, an' if you'd sin him, you'd say the very same thing!"

Farmer Strange came home before Aunt Shales had finished exclaiming over her story. He listened with unusual patience to her long account of the fright that she had received, saying very little himself, and rubbing his chin reflectively. When Aunt Shales had departed, and Di with her father sat alone at the tea-table, Farmer Strange stirred his tea slowly and in meditative silence.

"I had a queer turn to-night, Di," said he abruptly. "As I was passing Honeypots, the old mare shied at a man who was crossing the road right under her nose. If I hadn't felt so cock-sure that Gillway 'ud never run his nose into a trap, I should have sworn that it was the fellow himself. I never saw two faces so much alike!"

Di paled, staring at her father with wide startled eyes.

"Oh, daddy!" she said. "It couldn't have been him! Didn't you speak—or cry out to the man?"

"I sung out: 'Hulloa, Gillway!' but the chap didn't take any notice. He was off and out of sight as sharp as a ferret after a rat. Queer that Aunt Shales should have seen the same man. Looks as though he really is in the neighbourhood!"

Di said nothing. If Gillway had indeed returned from America, where was Kitty? Her mind was so occupied with this question that she started when her father said:

"Course it wasn't Gillway! He'd never come back unless 'twas to clear his character, and if 'twas to do that, he wouldn't turn tail and run at the sound of his own name when a friend called it. 'Twas but a chance resemblance, depend upon it." Di's heart grew big with compassion for her father as she tenderly waited upon him. She told herself that if he knew the secret that she and the Nabob had concealed from him, he would not have looked upon the man's running at the sound of his voice as a sure sign that the person who resembled John Gillway so greatly had not been John Gillway himself. To Di, that very circumstance pointed to the possibility that it was the missing tenant of Honeypots Farm, and no other, who had crossed her father's path that night.

(To be continued.)

NOTICE.

On account of the Jubilee Celebrations the next number of "Short Stories" will be published on Saturday, June 19th.

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Answers to Correspondents.

P. E. asks: "What is the height of the Queen? My chum and I have taken a wager upon it, and we intend to abide by your decision."——This question has already been answered several times before, but it still comes to this office with the regularity of the postman's knock. The height of Her Majesty is 4ft. 10in.

T. F.—Stand your boots in a dish of boiled linseed oil, allowing it to thoroughly saturate the soles. This will stop your boots from squeaking.

Pol.—Mr. Gladstone's longest speech took three hours and three-quarters to deliver. It was on the occasion of his first budget, and "held the House" to the last.

Liverpudlian.—Yes, although it is not a pleasant thing to say, there is no doubt that Hamburg has been disputing the supremacy of Liverpool very successfully of late years. The following figures will give you some idea of the progress shown by the two ports in the space of ten years:

	1885. Tons.		1895. Tons.
Liverpool	4,270,000	...	5,966,000
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The Manchester Ship Canal can scarcely be blamed for this result; as a matter of fact, but for this undertaking, Liverpool trade might have progressed even less rapidly.

O. P. P.—The Chiltern Hundreds—Burnham, Desborough, and Stoke—is an estate of the British Crown on the chain of chalk hills that pass from east to west through the middle of Buckinghamshire. The stewardship is a nominal office with a salary of twenty shillings, conferred on members of Parliament when they wish to vacate their seats, as, by accepting an office under the Crown, a member becomes disqualified unless he be again returned by his constituents.

E. J.—A million pennies placed side by side would stretch 18 miles 1,653 yards 1 foot.

F. V. asks: "What becomes of all the smuggled tobacco?"——We have made inquiries and find that a large proportion is sent to Broadmoor for the use of the lunatic criminals. The officials there manage to restrain many a refractory lunatic by threatening to withhold the tobacco unless a more placid disposition is shown.

S.—The only country where a tax is laid on cats seems to be Saxony.

Brixton.—The oldest Board School in London is Old Castle Street, Whitechapel, which was opened on July 17th, 1873.

E.—St. Paul's Cathedral is the ninth church that has stood on the site. The first one was erected in the year 223.

J. T. asks: "At what age does a child give its parents the least trouble?"——This is rather a large order, for so much depends upon the nature, health, and disposition of children individually. On the whole, I should think the first three months of a child's life is the time when it gives the least trouble, for during that happy period it cannot run about and get into mischief by falling into the fire, tumbling down the stairs, or upsetting crockery to the distraction of its mother; neither can it talk, and thus worry its paternal relative with a multitude of questions upon every conceivable subject; and, moreover, unless it is of an exceptionally restless disposition, it will sleep most of the first three months of its life.

P. G. K.—Strange to say, there are only three words in the English language ending in "dous." These three are "hazardous," "tremendous," and "stupendous."

C.—Land is probably more valuable in London than anywhere else on the face of the Universe. Some years ago a site in Old Broad Street, City, measuring 42ft. by 30ft., was sold for £37,000, or at the rate of £1,260,000 per acre.

Player.—It has been estimated that there are something like 635,000,000 different hands in the game of whist.

H.—Jericho in the time of Henry VIII. was the slang word for prison. Hence the origin of the expressive saying "Go to Jericho."

A. H.—People are foolish to disfigure themselves by tattooing. There is no way of ridding yourself of the marks to our knowledge.

Reader, writing from Paris, tells us of a curious fact regarding the beggars who thrive within the gay city, which says much for their impertinent enterprise. They have, it appears, established a journal which, every week contains articles on the best methods of pursuing the calling to which they devote themselves. If this is really a fact, the Parisian beggars have certainly stolen a march over their London brethren.

Ethel.—It is not considered good form for a bride to wear any but a high-necked and long-sleeved dress unless she is a member of the Royal Family.

Alf wonders how he can obtain the freedom of the City of London, and thinks that probably we may be able to assist him on this point. We can. There are three ways: (1) By Patrimony, *i.e.*, a son of a freeman born after the father has acquired his freedom. (2) By servitude: that is, by serving an apprenticeship of seven years to a freeman. (3) By redemption by purchase.

Weekly Subscriber wishes to know which are the three most expensive head-dresses in the British army.—Presumably you mean those for which the country has to pay. In this case the reply is as follows: Staff-Sergeant, Grenadier Guards, £10 6s.; Scots Guards, £10 3s. 10d.; Scots Greys, £9 19s. 2d. Officers' head-dresses are much more expensive.

Smokers will no doubt be pleased to hear that during this time of general rejoicing they have not been forgotten. Messrs. Vuillard and Strauss have forwarded me a sample of the "Diamond Jubilee" pipe. This pipe is ornamented with the Queen's head stamped upon the face of the bowl by a new process; it may be obtained at all the leading tobacconists' at the by no means exorbitant price of 1s.

Free Sampler.—I cannot agree with you in your opinion that the giving of free samples by post is an advertiser's dodge, and that only a few of the general public who apply for samples receive them; no respectable firm would be guilty of such a practice, and, as a rule, business houses are only too pleased to have the public answer their advertisements by the thousand. Nowadays it is hard to get a new article introduced on the market, and to push the same many smart ideas have lately been introduced. You are perfectly correct in assuming that articles when given free as samples are of good quality—it is scarcely to be expected that any person would be foolish enough to foist a worthless article on the public in this manner. If you care to apply to the following named houses I think your request for samples will be attended to in a manner that will lead you to alter your opinion on this subject: Dr. Tibble's Vi-Cocoa Ltd., Laurence Pountney Lane, E. C.; The Herbuline Co., 54, Bow Lane, E.C. (samples of their cure for Toothache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism etc.); and the Glebe Sugar Co., 86, Wilson Street, Glasgow., who tell me they will be glad to send you samples of their syrups and sugars.

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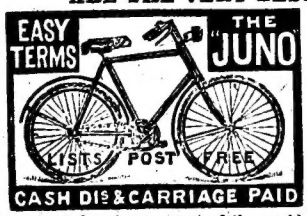

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